

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention violated federal appropriations law, including the Anti-Deficiency Act, by using government resources to publish partisan political messages during the September 30, 2025 government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the CDC's official website prominently displayed the following message (see Exhibit A):

The Trump Administration is working to reopen the government for the American people. Mission-critical activities of CDC will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown.

This banner was displayed on the CDC's official taxpayer-funded website, which serves as a critical public health resource accessed by millions of Americans seeking factual health information. Rather than providing neutral, factual information about the shutdown's impact on public health services, the message explicitly assigned partisan blame to "Democrat-led" actions while crediting the "Trump Administration."

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that purely partisan communications—those "completely devoid of any connection with official functions and completely political in nature"—constitute prohibited propaganda that agencies cannot fund with appropriations.

The CDC's message of a "Democratic-led government shutdown" served no legitimate public health purpose. It provided no information about which CDC programs would continue to operate, how the public could access essential services, or what health protections would remain in place. Instead, the message existed solely to assign political blame and credit along partisan lines.

Under GAO precedent, using appropriated funds for purely partisan communications violates the Anti-Deficiency Act because such expenditures exceed authorized appropriations. Any government resources, including employee time and government websites, used to create and disseminate purely partisan messages constitute unauthorized obligations of federal funds.

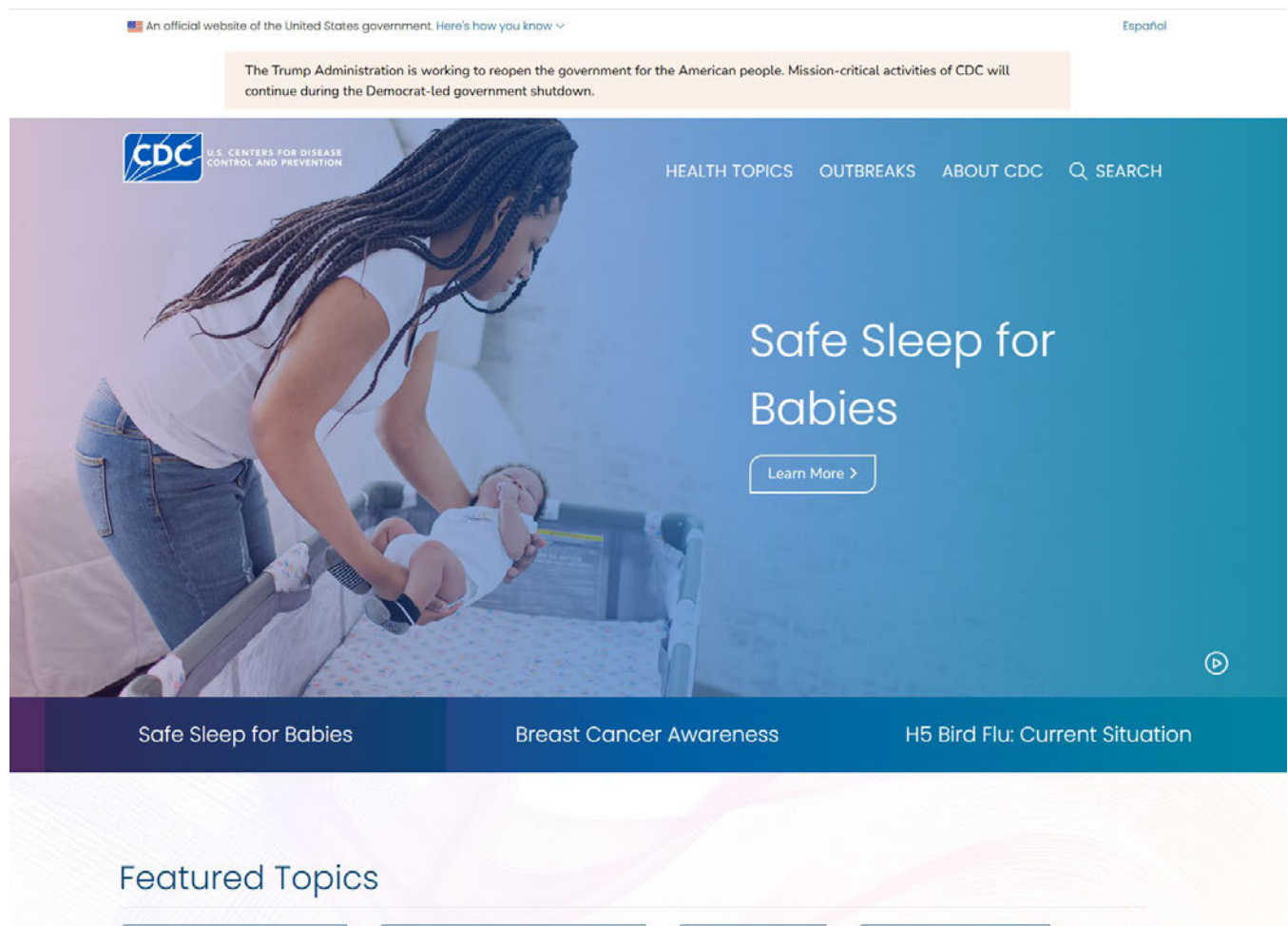
Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether CDC violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to publish and maintain partisan political messaging that served no official agency function. The American people deserve public health agencies that provide factual, nonpartisan information, particularly during national emergencies.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A



October 3, 2025
Ms. Juliet T. Hodgkins
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Inspector General

Dear Acting Inspector General Hodgkins:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a component of the Department of Health and Human Services. This complaint requests that the HHS Office of Inspector General investigate the CDC's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the CDC displayed partisan political messaging on its official taxpayer-funded website that served no legitimate public health purpose. Specifically, the CDC's homepage prominently featured the following banner message:

The Trump Administration is working to reopen the government for the American people. Mission-critical activities of CDC will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown.

This message was displayed at the top of the CDC's official website (cdc.gov), which serves as a critical public health resource accessed by millions of Americans seeking factual health information. Rather than providing neutral information about which CDC programs would continue operating during the shutdown or how the public could access essential health services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The CDC's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the official CDC website, federal employee time, and taxpayer-funded web infrastructure—to advance political positions that served no official agency function.

Specific Violations

The CDC's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the CDC website required the use of federal employee time, government web servers, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By assigning partisan blame for the government shutdown to "Democrat-led" actions while crediting the "Trump Administration," the message was designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about agency operations.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The CDC has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the agency's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Jim O'Neil, Acting Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the CDC's official website. As the senior official overseeing the agency, he would have authority over and responsibility for ensuring that CDC communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached a screenshot of the CDC's official website, which shows the partisan political message that was prominently displayed during the government shutdown. This evidence demonstrates the violation and shows the specific language used.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the HHS Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:


- Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the CDC website;
- Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
- Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
- Reviewing CDC policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
- Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve federal agencies that use taxpayer resources for legitimate government functions, not partisan political messaging.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause




Exhibit A

 An official website of the United States government. [Here's how you know](#) ▾


Español

The Trump Administration is working to reopen the government for the American people. Mission-critical activities of CDC will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown.



U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE
CONTROL AND PREVENTION

HEALTH TOPICS OUTBREAKS ABOUT CDC 🔍 SEARCH



Safe Sleep for Babies

Learn More >

▶

Safe Sleep for Babies Breast Cancer Awareness H5 Bird Flu: Current Situation

Featured Topics





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Jim

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* O'Neil

Position Title: Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Department:* Health and Human Services

Agency:* Centers For Disease Control And Prevention

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30329

Office Phone Number: 800-232-4636

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Director of the Centers, O'Neil bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Centers' compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, he would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given his position as the chief officer of the Center, it is reasonable to conclude that he is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.

Description of alleged violation:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Jim O'Neil, Acting Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is responsible for partisan messaging posted on the official CDC website during the government shutdown beginning September 30, 2025. Instead of providing neutral, factual information about the shutdown's impact, the CDC website displayed a banner that read:

"The Trump Administration is working to reopen the government for the American people. Mission-critical activities of CDC will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown."

This message was prominently displayed on the CDC's official site, a taxpayer-funded government platform, and directly assigned partisan blame for the shutdown to "Democrat-led" actions while simultaneously crediting the Trump Administration.

The violations occurred on the CDC's official website, which is publicly accessible and widely used as a trusted source for health information. The partisan content was displayed at the onset of the government shutdown on September 30, 2025 and has continued to be visible thereafter.

Knowledge of these violations is widespread, as the messaging was published on a federal agency's official webpage accessible to the public and reported by national media outlets.

As Acting Director, Jim O'Neil would have received Hatch Act training and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that CDC communications remain nonpartisan. By permitting the official CDC website to carry partisan political messaging that blames one political party and credits another, O'Neil violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on using government resources for political activity.

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
CDC1.png	1,944,743

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identity to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of Homeland Security violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, DHS sent agency-wide emails to federal employees containing explicitly partisan statements about the shutdown. According to news reports, these official communications stated:

President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports enactment of H.R. 5371, which is a clean Continuing Resolution to fund the government through November 21, and already passed the U.S. House of Representatives. Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands. If Congressional Democrats maintain their current posture and refuse to pass a clean Continuing Resolution to keep the government funded before midnight on September 30, 2025, federal appropriated funding will lapse.

The emails further referenced "any lapse in appropriations forced by Congressional Democrats" and claimed that "Congressional Democrats are blocking" passage of continuing resolution legislation.

These communications were distributed through official DHS email systems using taxpayer-funded government resources to advance partisan political positions rather than provide neutral information about agency operations during the shutdown.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. Communications that serve purely partisan purposes—explicitly blaming one political party while praising another—constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The DHS emails ascribing partisan blame served no legitimate operational purpose related to homeland security functions. Rather than informing employees about which essential functions would continue or how to access necessary services, the messages existed solely to advance partisan talking points and assign political blame for the shutdown.

Using government email systems and employee time to create and distribute purely partisan communications violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating federal funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed appropriated authority.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether DHS violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging that served no official agency purpose. This investigation should examine the authorization, approval, and distribution of these communications to determine what government resources were improperly used for partisan political purposes.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause



October 3, 2025
Mr. Joseph V. Cuffari
Inspector General
Office of Inspector General/MAIL STOP 0305
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528-0305

Dear Inspector General Cuffari:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of Homeland Security. This complaint requests that the DHS Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security sent agency-wide emails to federal employees containing explicitly partisan political statements that served no legitimate homeland security purpose. These official communications were distributed through taxpayer-funded DHS email systems and government resources.

According to news reports, the partisan email sent to DHS employees stated:

President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports enactment of H.R. 5371, which is a clean Continuing Resolution to fund the government through November 21, and already passed the U.S. House of Representatives. Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands. If Congressional Democrats maintain their current posture and refuse to pass a clean Continuing Resolution to keep the government funded before midnight on September 30, 2025, federal appropriated funding will lapse.

The DHS email further referenced "any lapse in appropriations forced by Congressional Democrats" and claimed that "Congressional Democrats are blocking" passage of continuing resolution legislation. These communications were distributed through official DHS email systems using taxpayer-funded government resources to advance partisan political positions rather than provide neutral information about agency operations during the shutdown.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The DHS partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including official DHS email systems, federal employee time, and taxpayer-funded communication infrastructure—to advance political positions that served no official homeland security function.

Specific Violations

The DHS actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and distribution of partisan political content through DHS email systems required the use of federal employee time, government communication systems, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Congressional Democrats" for blocking legislation while praising President Trump's position, the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about DHS operations.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** DHS has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Kristi Noem bears ultimate responsibility for the content distributed through official DHS communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the Department, she has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that DHS communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging distributed through official DHS channels.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the DHS Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and distribution of the partisan political messaging through DHS email systems;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and distribute this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;



4. Reviewing DHS policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve federal agencies that use taxpayer resources for legitimate government functions, not partisan political messaging that undermines the Department's homeland security mission.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A

The Hill, *Federal employees told Democrats to blame for shutdown in 'highly inappropriate' email*, (September 30, 2025): <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5530094-federal-emails-shutdown-democrats/>





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Kristi

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Noem

Position Title: Secretary of Homeland Security

Department:* Homeland Security

Agency:* Dhs Headquarters

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of the agency, Noem bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the agency's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the agency head would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given this position as the chief officer of the agency, it is reasonable to conclude that the head of the agency is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

The subject of this complaint is Kristi Noem, Secretary of Homeland Security. On and after September 30, 2025, during the federal government shutdown, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) used official government communication systems—including agency-wide emails—to disseminate partisan political statements blaming Congressional Democrats for the shutdown.

According to news reporting, federal employees at DHS received identical emails on Tuesday, September 30, 2025, that stated:

"President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports enactment of H.R. 5371, which is a clean Continuing Resolution to fund the government through November 21, and already passed the U.S. House of Representatives. Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands. If Congressional Democrats maintain their current posture and refuse to pass a clean Continuing Resolution to keep the government funded before midnight on September 30, 2025, federal appropriated funding will lapse."

The DHS email further stated that contingency plans were in place for "any lapse in appropriations forced by Congressional Democrats." In addition, a DHS email specifically referenced the continuing resolution and claimed that "Congressional Democrats are blocking its passage."

These communications were sent using official DHS systems and taxpayer-funded platforms, in violation of the Hatch Act's prohibition on using government resources to engage in partisan political activity. The messages explicitly blamed one political party—Democrats—for the shutdown, while aligning DHS with President Trump and his party's policy position, thereby engaging in partisan political advocacy.

Because these emails were distributed across DHS's official communication systems, the violations were known to DHS leadership, all employees receiving the emails, and the general public through subsequent media reporting.

As Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring DHS communications remain nonpartisan and compliant with federal ethics laws. By allowing official DHS resources to be used for partisan messaging, she violated the Hatch Act.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
-----------	----------------

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of the Interior violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political communications during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of the Interior distributed official communications to DOI staff that contained explicitly partisan messaging about the shutdown. According to reports, these official department messages stated that **"ANY LAPSE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDING WOULD BE FORCED BY CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS"** and described Democrats as blocking a clean continuing resolution to pursue unrelated policy demands.

These partisan statements were communicated through official DOI channels and government systems, using taxpayer resources to advance political messaging that assigned blame to one political party while defending the Trump Administration's position on the shutdown.

Rather than providing neutral information about which Interior Department functions would continue during the shutdown or how the public could access essential services, these communications served purely partisan purposes, explicitly blaming Congressional Democrats for the appropriations lapse while promoting the Administration's legislative priorities.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently determined that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The Interior Department's partisan messaging violated these restrictions by using official government communication systems, employee time, and other federal resources to disseminate political statements that served no legitimate operational purpose related to the Department's mission of managing America's natural resources and cultural heritage.

Using government resources to distribute purely partisan communications violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the agency's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of the Interior violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization, creation, and distribution of these communications to determine what federal resources were improperly used for partisan political purposes.

The American people deserve federal agencies that use taxpayer resources for legitimate government functions, not partisan political messaging.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause



October 3, 2025

Ms. Caryl Brzymialkiewicz
Acting Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
Attention: Intake Management Unit
1849 C Street, NW.
MS 4428
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Acting Inspector General Brzymialkiewicz:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of the Interior. This complaint requests that the DOI Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of the Interior distributed official communications to DOI staff that contained explicit partisan messaging about the shutdown. These communications served no legitimate operational purpose related to the Department's mission of managing America's natural resources and cultural heritage.

According to reports, the official department messages stated that "ANY LAPSE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDING WOULD BE FORCED BY CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS" and described Democrats as blocking a clean continuing resolution to pursue unrelated policy demands. These partisan statements were communicated through official DOI channels and government systems, using taxpayer resources to advance political messaging that assigned blame to one political party while defending the Trump Administration's position on the shutdown.

Rather than providing neutral information about which Interior Department functions would continue during the shutdown or how the public could access essential services, these communications served purely partisan purposes—explicitly blaming Congressional Democrats for the appropriations lapse while promoting the Administration's legislative priorities.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of

Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The DOI's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including official DOI communication systems, federal employee time, and taxpayer-funded infrastructure—to advance political positions that served no official agency function.

Specific Violations

The DOI's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and distribution of partisan political content through DOI communication systems required the use of federal employee time, government infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Congressional Democrats" for the shutdown while defending the Administration's position, the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about DOI operations.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** DOI has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Doug Burgum bears ultimate responsibility for the content distributed through official DOI communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the Department, he has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that DOI communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging distributed through official DOI channels.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the DOI Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and distribution of the partisan political messaging through DOI communication systems;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and distribute this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing DOI policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve federal agencies that use taxpayer resources for legitimate government functions—such as managing America's natural resources and cultural heritage—not partisan political messaging that undermines the Department's mission.



Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A

ABC7, *Government websites displaying messages blaming Democrats for shutdown*, (October 1, 2025)
<https://abc7.com/post/government-websites-displaying-messages-blaming-democrats-shutdown/17918723/>

Fox News Channel, *Media bashes Trump admin messaging for pinning shutdown on Dems, White House fires back*, (October 2, 2025): <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/media-bashes-trump-admin-messaging-pinning-shutdown-dems-white-house-fires-back>





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Doug

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Burgum

Position Title: Secretary of the Interior

Department:* Interior

Agency:* Office of the Secretary of the Interior

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Office Phone Number: 202-208-3100

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of the agency, Burgum bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the agency's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the agency head would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given this position as the chief officer of the agency, it is reasonable to conclude that the head of the agency is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Doug Burgum, Secretary of the Interior, is responsible for partisan communications issued by the Department of the Interior (DOI) during the federal government shutdown beginning September 30, 2025.

According to multiple reports and internal messages, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directed federal agencies, including DOI, to distribute shutdown communications that explicitly blamed Congressional Democrats for the lapse in appropriations. According to news reports, employees at DOI received these messages, which stated that "any lapse in government funding would be forced by Congressional Democrats" and described Democrats as blocking a clean continuing resolution in order to pursue unrelated policy demands.

The violations occurred beginning on September 30, 2025, when the shutdown began, and were distributed to DOI staff and the public via official Department communication systems. Because the messages were issued through official government platforms, they were publicly accessible and widely known to DOI employees, other federal agencies, and the general public.

As Secretary of the Interior, Doug Burgum would have received Hatch Act training and bears responsibility for ensuring his Department's communications remain nonpartisan. By permitting official DOI communications to be used for partisan political messaging, Burgum violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on engaging in political activity using government resources.

See:

<https://www.npr.org/2025/09/30/nx-s1-5558393/government-shutdown-trump-ethics-hatch-act>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
-----------	----------------

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of Justice violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, the Department of Justice displayed a partisan political message on its official website banner. Instead of providing neutral information about the shutdown's impact on DOJ services, the Department's homepage prominently featured the following message (see Exhibit A):

Democrats have shut down the government. Department of Justice websites are not currently regularly updated. Please refer to the Department of Justice's contingency plan for more information.

This banner message was displayed at the top of the DOJ's official website, using taxpayer-funded government platforms to assign partisan blame for the shutdown. Rather than informing the public about which Justice Department functions would continue or how to access essential services, the message served purely partisan purposes by disparaging one political party while echoing the Administration's political messaging.

The Justice Department's website serves as a critical resource for Americans seeking information about federal law enforcement, civil rights enforcement, and other essential DOJ functions. Using this platform for partisan political messaging undermines the Department's role and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for partisan political activity.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The Justice Department's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official website, government servers, and employee time to create and maintain political statements that served no legitimate law enforcement or operational purpose related to the Department's mission.

Using government resources to display partisan political messaging violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate communications about agency operations.

Request for Investigation

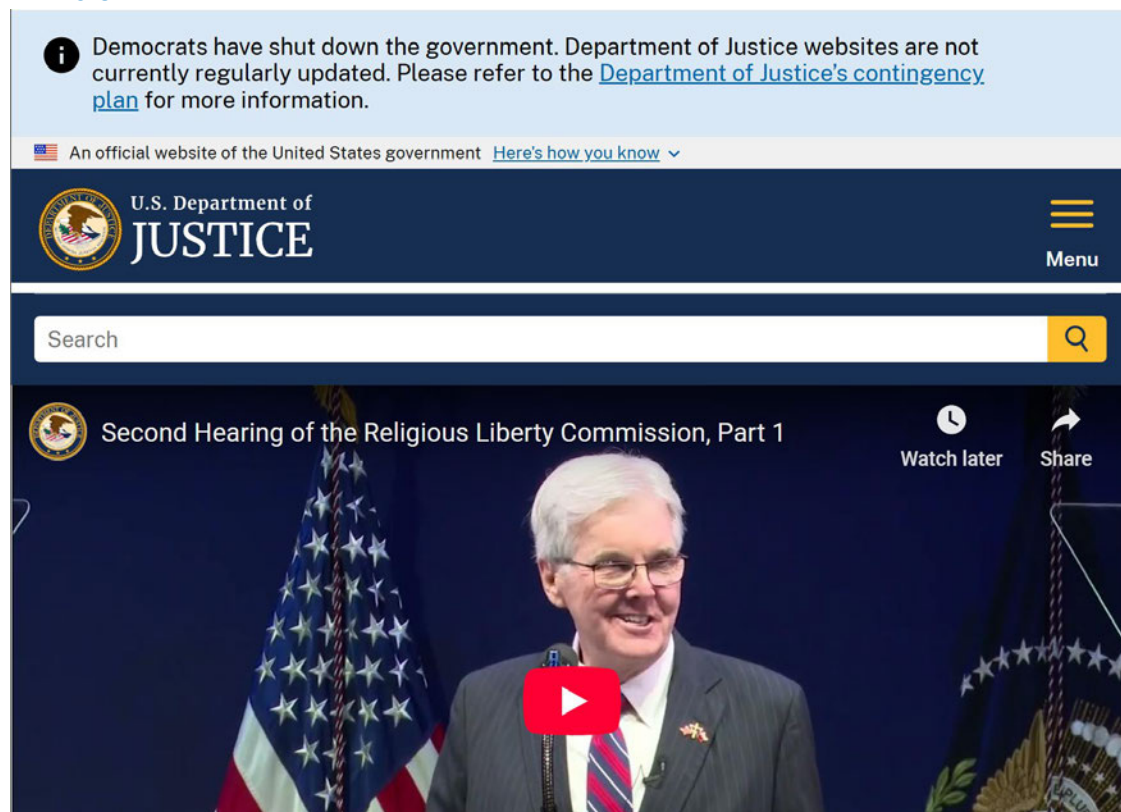
We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of Justice violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and display partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the federal resources used to develop and maintain these partisan communications, as well as who authorized their publication.

The Department of Justice should focus on upholding the rule of law, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A



October 3, 2025
Mr. William M. Blier
Acting Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Acting Inspector General Blier:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of Justice. This complaint requests that the DOJ Office of the Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, the Department of Justice displayed a partisan political message on its official website banner that served no legitimate law enforcement purpose. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity. Instead of providing neutral information about the shutdown's impact on DOJ services, the Department's homepage prominently featured the following message:

Democrats have shut down the government. Department of Justice websites are not currently regularly updated. Please refer to the Department of Justice's contingency plan for more information.

This banner message was displayed at the top of the DOJ's official website, using taxpayer-funded government platforms to assign partisan blame for the shutdown. Rather than informing the public about which Justice Department functions would continue or how to access essential services, the message served purely partisan purposes by disparaging one political party while echoing the Administration's political messaging.

The Justice Department's website serves as a critical resource for Americans seeking information about federal law enforcement, civil rights enforcement, and other essential DOJ functions. Using this platform for partisan political messaging undermines the Department's role as an impartial enforcer of federal law.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement,

telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The DOJ's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official website, government servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no official law enforcement function.

Specific Violations

The DOJ's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the DOJ website required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly stating "Democrats have shut down the government," the message was designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about DOJ operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** DOJ has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Attorney General Pamela Bondi bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the Department of Justice's official website. As the senior official overseeing the Department, she has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that DOJ communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the DOJ website.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the DOJ Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

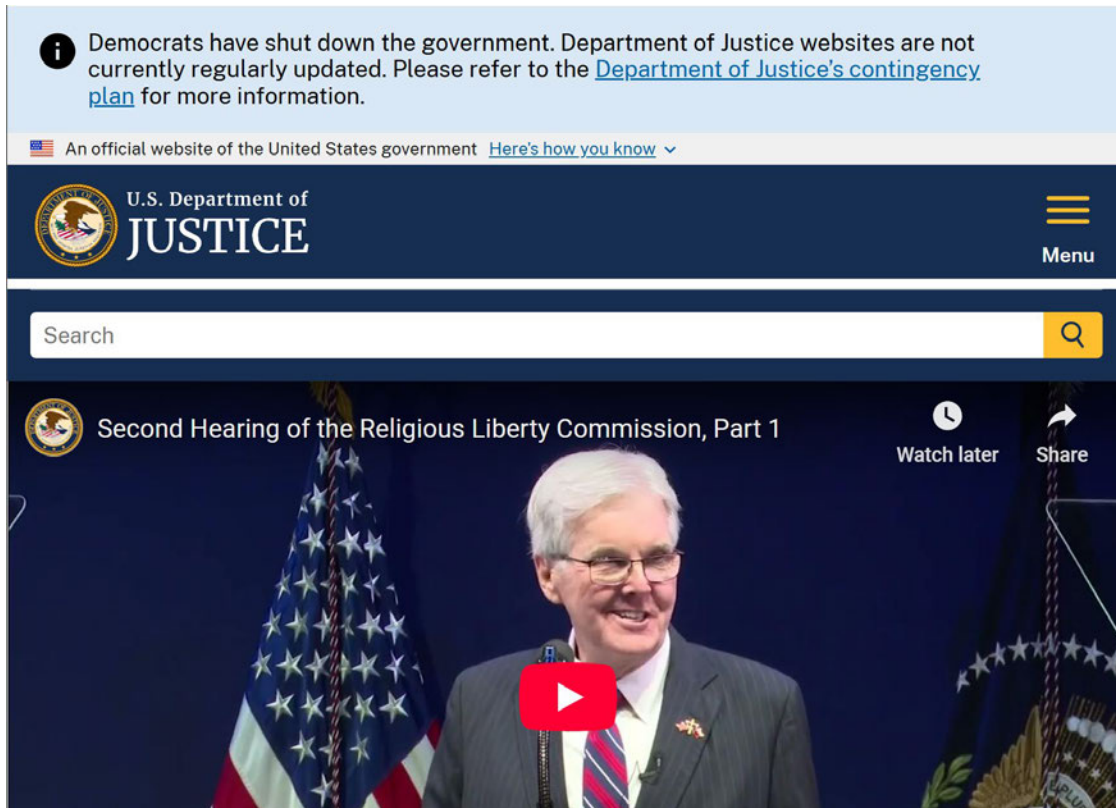
1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the DOJ website;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing DOJ policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of Justice that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate law enforcement functions, not partisan political messaging that undermines the Department's mission to uphold the rule of law impartially.



Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Pamela

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Bondi

Position Title: Attorney General

Department:* Justice

Agency:* Other

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Office Phone Number: 202-514-2000

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Attorney General of the Department, Bondi bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Department's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, she would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given her position as the chief officer of the Department, it is reasonable to conclude that she is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Pamela Bondi, Attorney General of the United States, is responsible for partisan messages displayed on the Department of Justice's official website during the government shutdown beginning September 30, 2025. Instead of providing a neutral notice about limited services during the lapse in appropriations, the Department published a banner message blaming one political party for the shutdown.

The partisan message, prominently displayed at the top of the DOJ homepage, read: "Democrats have shut down the government. Department of Justice websites are not currently regularly updated. Please refer to the Department of Justice's contingency plan for more information."

This banner used taxpayer-funded government platforms to disparage one political party while echoing the political messaging of the President and his allies. By placing partisan blame in an official communication channel, the Department engaged in prohibited political activity using federal resources.

As Attorney General, Bondi would have received Hatch Act training and is responsible for ensuring DOJ communications remain nonpartisan. By allowing the Department's official website to host partisan shutdown messages, she violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on political activity using government resources.

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
DOJ1.png	917,817

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identity to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of Labor violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Labor implemented partisan political messaging in official out-of-office email auto-replies sent from DOL employee accounts. Instead of using standard neutral shutdown language, the Department—under Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer's leadership—replaced neutral communications with explicitly partisan messaging.

According to widespread news report, Department-mandated auto-reply message stated:

Due to Democrat Senators blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate, appropriations have lapsed and I am currently in furlough status. I will respond to emails once government functions resume.

This partisan message was automatically distributed from hundreds of DOL employee email accounts, including both furloughed and essential employees, using the Department's official email infrastructure. Rather than providing neutral information about the shutdown's impact on Labor Department services, the messages served purely partisan purposes by assigning blame to "Democrat Senators" while promoting specific House legislation. The Department of Labor's email systems serve critical functions related to workplace safety, employment rights, and worker protections. Using these taxpayer-funded communication platforms for partisan political messaging undermines the Department's mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for partisan political activity.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The Labor Department's implementation of partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official email systems, government servers, and employee time to create and distribute

political statements that served no legitimate operational purpose related to the Department's mission of protecting American workers.

Using government resources to automatically distribute partisan political messaging from hundreds of employee email accounts violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of Labor violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, implement, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of these partisan auto-reply messages and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than operational purposes.

The Department of Labor should focus on protecting American workers and enforcing labor laws, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause



October 3, 2025

Mr. Michael C. Mikulka

Acting Deputy Inspector General, performing the duties of the Inspector General

Office of Inspector General

200 Constitution Avenue, NW

Room S-5502

Washington, DC 20210

Dear Acting Inspector General Mikulka:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of Labor. This complaint requests that the DOL Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Labor implemented partisan political messaging in official out-of-office email auto-replies sent from DOL employee accounts. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity.

Instead of using standard neutral shutdown language, the Department—under Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer's leadership—replaced neutral communications with explicitly partisan messaging. According to widespread news reports, the Department-mandated auto-reply message stated:

Due to Democrat Senators blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate, appropriations have lapsed and I am currently in furlough status. I will respond to emails once government functions resume.

According to widespread news reports, this partisan message was automatically distributed from hundreds of DOL employee email accounts, including both furloughed and essential employees, using the Department's official email infrastructure. Rather than providing neutral information about the shutdown's impact on Labor Department services, the messages served purely partisan purposes by assigning blame to "Democrat Senators" while promoting specific House legislation (H.R. 5371).

The Department of Labor's email systems serve critical functions related to workplace safety, employment rights, and worker protections. Using these taxpayer-funded communication platforms for partisan political messaging undermines the Department's mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for partisan political activity.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

DOL's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official email systems, government servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no official labor-related function.

Specific Violations

DOL's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, implementation, and distribution of partisan political content through hundreds of DOL employee email accounts required the use of federal employee time, government email infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Democrat Senators" for blocking specific House legislation (H.R. 5371), the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about DOL operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** DOL has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer bears ultimate responsibility for the content distributed through official DOL communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the Department, she has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that DOL communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging distributed through official DOL email accounts.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the DOL Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and implementation of the partisan political messaging in DOL employee email auto-replies;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and distribute this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;



4. Reviewing DOL policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of Labor that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate functions—protecting American workers and enforcing labor laws—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A

Wired, *Government Workers Say Their Out-of-Office Replies Were Forcibly Changed to Blame Democrats for Shutdown*, (October 2, 2025): <https://www.wired.com/story/government-workers-say-their-out-of-office-replies-were-forcibly-changed-to-blame-democrats-for-shutdown/>

The New York Times, *Federal Agencies Use Official Websites to Blame Democrats for Shutdown*, (October 1, 2025): <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/01/us/politics/furlough-small-business-administration-emails.html>





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Lori

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Chavez-DeRemer

Position Title: Secretary of Labor

Department:* Labor

Agency:* Office of the Secretary of Labor

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

200 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20210

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Secretary of the Department, Chavez-DeRemer bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Department's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, she would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given her position as the chief officer of the Department, it is reasonable to conclude that she is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Chavez-DeRemer, Secretary of Labor, is responsible for partisan out-of-office email messages automatically sent from Department of Labor employee accounts during the government shutdown beginning September 30, 2025. Staff were expected to use standard neutral shutdown language, but the Department — at the direction of senior officials — replaced it with a partisan version.

The new auto-reply read: "Due to Democrat Senators blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate, appropriations have lapsed and I am currently in furlough status. I will respond to emails once government functions resume."

This message was distributed widely, including by both furloughed and essential employees, and used taxpayer-funded systems to blame one political party for the shutdown while crediting the other.

As Secretary, Chavez-DeRemer would have received Hatch Act training and is responsible for ensuring Department communications remain nonpartisan. By allowing official email accounts to be used for partisan messaging, she violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on political activity using government resources.

See: <https://www.wired.com/story/government-workers-say-their-out-of-office-replies-were-forcibly-changed-to-blame-democrats-for-shutdown/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/01/us/politics/furlough-small-business-administration-emails.html>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
-----------	----------------

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of State violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to display partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, the Department of State—under Secretary Marco Rubio's leadership—displayed a prominent red banner across the top of its official website that read:

Federal Government Shutdown. Due to the Democrat-led shutdown, website updates will be limited until full operations resume.

This partisan message was prominently featured on the State Department's homepage, using the Department's taxpayer-funded official website to assign political blame to one party for the appropriations lapse. Rather than providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected diplomatic services, consular operations, or emergency assistance for American citizens abroad, the banner existed solely to advance partisan political messaging.

The State Department's website serves as a critical resource for Americans traveling abroad, foreign nationals seeking visa information, and diplomatic partners worldwide. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political statements undermines the Department's diplomatic mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently determined that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The State Department's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and employee time to create and maintain political statements that served no legitimate diplomatic or operational purpose related to the Department's mission of conducting American foreign policy.

Using government resources to display partisan political messaging on an official agency website violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about agency services.

Request for Investigation

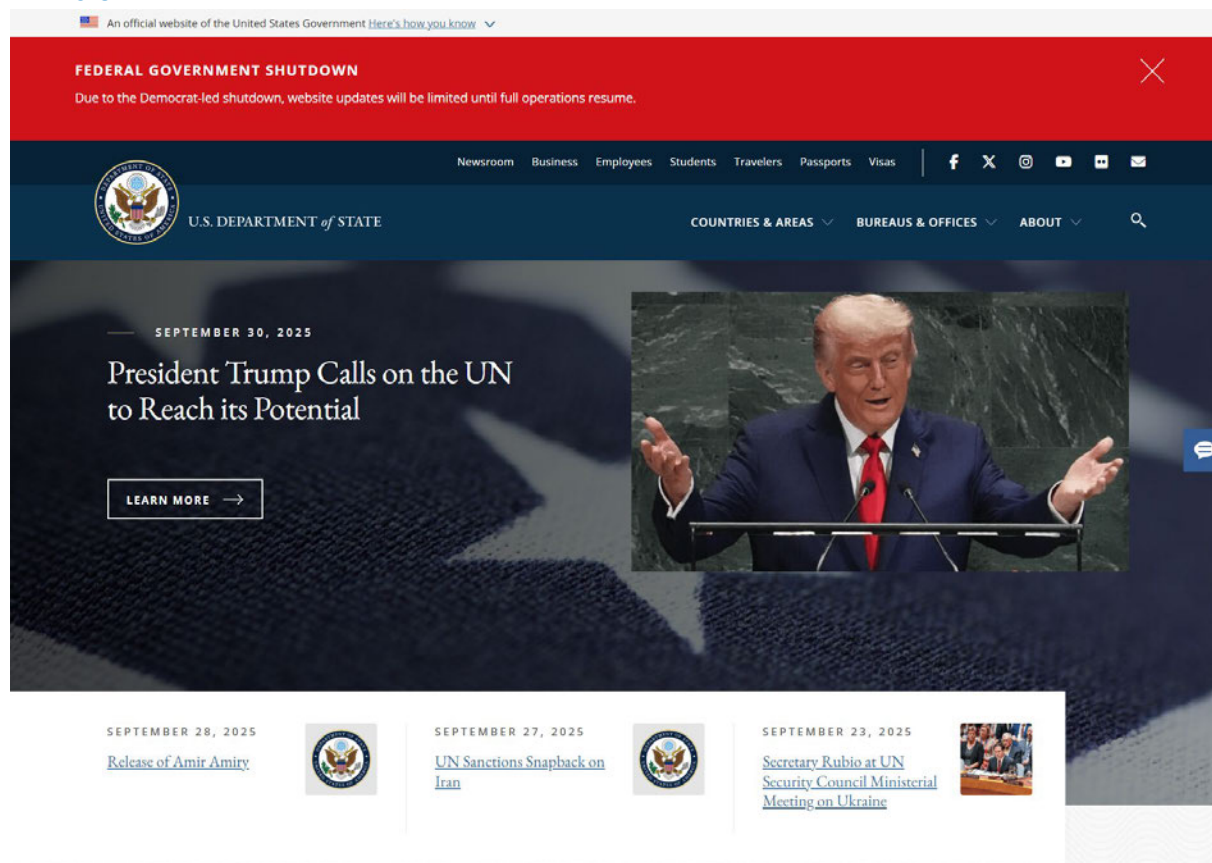
We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of State violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and display partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of this partisan website banner and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than diplomatic purposes.

The Department of State should focus on conducting American diplomacy and serving Americans abroad, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A



October 3, 2025
Mr. Arne B. Baker
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of State
Office of Inspector General
1700 North Moore Street (SA-39)
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Acting Inspector General Baker:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of State. This complaint requests that the DOS Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, the Department of State—under Secretary Marco Rubio's leadership—displayed a prominent red banner across the top of its official website that served no legitimate diplomatic purpose. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity. The banner read:

Federal Government Shutdown. Due to the Democrat-led shutdown, website updates will be limited until full operations resume.

This partisan message was prominently featured on the State Department's homepage, using the Department's taxpayer-funded official website to assign political blame to one party for the appropriations lapse. Rather than providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected diplomatic services, consular operations, or emergency assistance for American citizens abroad, the banner existed solely to advance partisan political messaging.

The State Department's website serves as a critical resource for Americans traveling abroad, foreign nationals seeking visa information, and diplomatic partners worldwide. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political statements undermines the Department's diplomatic mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement,

telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The State Department's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no official diplomatic function.

Specific Violations

The State Department's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the State Department website required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly stating the shutdown was "Democrat-led," the message was designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about State Department operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The State Department has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Marco Rubio bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the Department of State's official website. As the senior official overseeing the Department, he has authority over, and responsibility for, ensuring that State Department communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the State Department website.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the DOS Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the State Department website;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing State Department policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

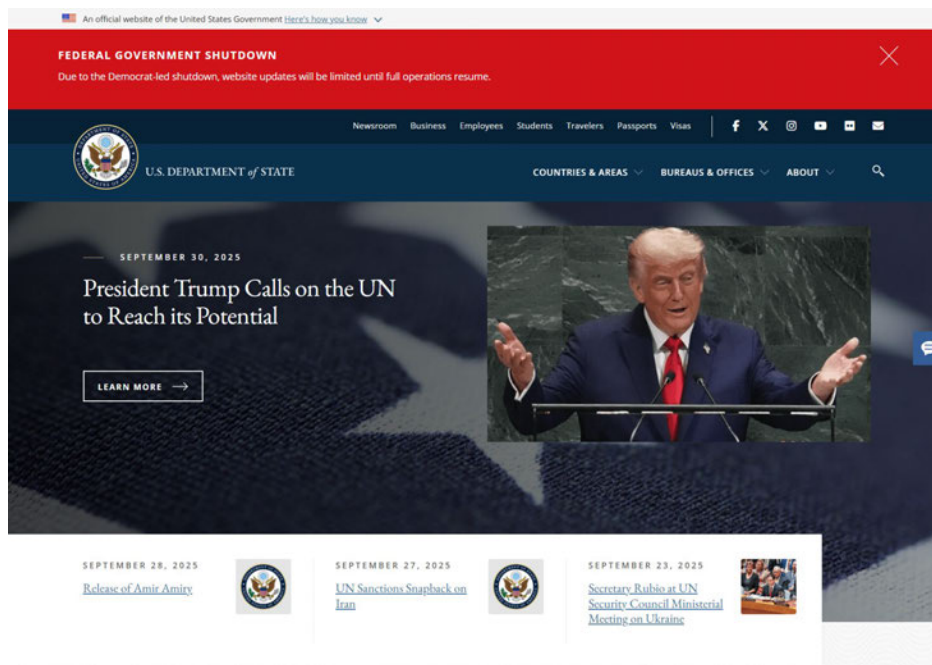
Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of State that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate diplomatic functions—conducting American foreign policy and serving



Americans abroad—not partisan political messaging that undermines the Department's mission and America's diplomatic standing.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Marco

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Rubio

Position Title: Secretary of State

Department:* State

Agency:* Other

Agency subcomponent: Office of the Secretary of State

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Office Phone Number: 202-647-0488

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Secretary of the Department, Rubio bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Department's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, she would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given her position as the chief officer of the Department, it is reasonable to conclude that she is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, is responsible for partisan messaging displayed on the official Department of State website during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

At the top of the State Department's website, a prominent red banner appeared stating:

"Federal Government Shutdown. Due to the Democrat-led shutdown, website updates will be limited until full operations resume."

This statement, published on an official federal government website, used taxpayer-funded resources to assign partisan blame to one political party for the shutdown. By placing this message on the agency's homepage, the Department crossed the line from neutral communication into partisan political activity.

The violation occurred on the Department of State's official website beginning on or about October 1, 2025, and the banner remained publicly visible to all website visitors. Because this messaging was posted on a public-facing website operated by the Department, knowledge of the violation is widespread. The message was accessible to all employees within the Department of State as well as to the general public, and it has been reported in national media, including Yahoo News.

As Secretary of State, Marco Rubio would have received Hatch Act training and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that official Department communications remain nonpartisan. By permitting and overseeing the use of the Department's website for partisan political messaging, Rubio violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on engaging in political activity while acting in an official capacity and using government resources.

See: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/office-messages-blaming-democrats-shutdown-182753366.html>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
DOS1.png	1,400,320

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of Education violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Education—under the leadership of Secretary Linda McMahon—replaced neutral out-of-office email auto-replies with explicitly partisan messaging sent from potentially hundreds of employee accounts throughout the Department.

According to widespread news reports, initially, ED staff were instructed to use neutral shutdown messaging for their auto-replies. However, the Department subsequently replaced these neutral messages with partisan content without informing or obtaining consent from employees. The new auto-reply read:

Thank you for contacting the press team. On September 19, 2025, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5371, a clean continuing resolution. Unfortunately, Democrat Senators are blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate which has led to a lapse in appropriations. Due to the lapse in appropriations we are currently in furlough status. I will respond to emails once government functions resume.

This partisan messaging was automatically distributed from numerous Department employee email accounts, including through the Department's press office, using taxpayer-funded government systems to blame one political party while crediting another. Rather than providing neutral information about the shutdown's impact on educational services or student aid programs, the messages served purely partisan purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently determined that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The Education Department's replacement of neutral messaging with partisan content violated these restrictions by using the Department's official email infrastructure, government servers, and employee time to create and

automatically distribute political statements that served no legitimate educational purpose related to the Department's mission of ensuring access to education and promoting educational excellence.

Using government resources to systematically distribute partisan political messaging from hundreds of employee accounts violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of Education violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to replace neutral communications with partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of this department-wide partisan messaging campaign and determine what federal resources were improperly used for political rather than educational purposes.

The Department of Education should focus on serving students and families, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A

Automatic reply: Test



Press<Press@ed.gov>

To: Omar Nouredin



Fri 10/3/2025 12:48 AM

Thank you for contacting the press team. On September 19, 2025, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5371, a clean continuing resolution. Unfortunately, Democrat Senators are blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate which has led to a lapse in appropriations. Due to the lapse in appropriations, we are currently in furlough status. We will respond to emails once government functions resume.

Reply

Forward



October 3, 2025
Ms. Heidi Semann
Acting Inspector General
US Department of Education
Office of Inspector General
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Acting Inspector General Semann:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of Education. This complaint requests that the ED Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Education—under the leadership of Secretary Linda McMahon—replaced neutral out-of-office email auto-replies with explicitly partisan messaging sent from potentially hundreds of employee accounts throughout the Department. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity.

According to widespread news reports, initially, ED staff were instructed to use neutral shutdown messaging for their auto-replies. However, the Department subsequently replaced these neutral messages with partisan content without informing or obtaining consent from employees. The new auto-reply read:

Thank you for contacting the press team. On September 19, 2025, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5371, a clean continuing resolution. Unfortunately, Democrat Senators are blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate which has led to a lapse in appropriations. Due to the lapse in appropriations we are currently in furlough status. I will respond to emails once government functions resume.

This partisan messaging was automatically distributed from numerous Department employee email accounts, including through the Department's press office, using taxpayer-funded government systems to blame "Democrat Senators" while crediting House Republicans for passing H.R. 5371. Rather than providing neutral information about the shutdown's impact on educational services or student aid programs, the messages served purely partisan purposes.

The Department of Education's email systems serve critical functions for students, families, educators, and institutions seeking information about federal education programs, student financial aid, and educational policy. Using these taxpayer-funded communication platforms for partisan political messaging undermines the

Department's educational mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The Education Department's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official email systems, government servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate educational function.

Specific Violations

The Education Department's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, implementation, and distribution of partisan political content through hundreds of ED employee email accounts required the use of federal employee time, government email infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Democrat Senators" for blocking specific House legislation (H.R. 5371) while praising House passage of the bill, the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about ED operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The Education Department has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Linda McMahon bears ultimate responsibility for the content distributed through official Education Department communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the Department, she has authority over, and responsibility for, ensuring that ED communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging distributed through official ED email accounts.



Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the ED Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:


1. Determining who authorized the creation and implementation of the partisan political messaging in ED employee email auto-replies;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and distribute this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing ED policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of Education that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate educational functions—serving students and families—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.


Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause









Exhibit A

Automatic reply: Test




Press<Press@ed.gov>


To:  Omar Nouredin



Fri 10/3/2025 12:48 AM

Thank you for contacting the press team. On September 19, 2025, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5371, a clean continuing resolution. Unfortunately, Democrat Senators are blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate which has led to a lapse in appropriations. Due to the lapse in appropriations, we are currently in furlough status. We will respond to emails once government functions resume.

 Reply

 Forward





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Linda

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* McMahon

Position Title: Secretary of Education

Department:* Education

Agency:* Immediate Office of the Secretary of Education

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Secretary of the Department, McMahon bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Department's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, she would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given her position as the chief officer of the Department, it is reasonable to conclude that she is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

ALLEGED VIOLATION

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.

Description of alleged violation:

Linda McMahon, Secretary of Education, is responsible for partisan out-of-office email messages automatically sent from Department of Education employee accounts during the government shutdown beginning September 30, 2025. Although staff were initially instructed to use a neutral message, the Department unilaterally replaced it with a partisan version, without employee knowledge or consent.

The new auto-reply read: "Thank you for contacting me. On September 19, 2025, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5371, a clean continuing resolution. Unfortunately, Democrat Senators are blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate which has led to a lapse in appropriations. Due to the lapse in appropriations I am currently in furlough status. I will respond to emails once government functions resume."

This message was distributed widely, including through the Department's press office, and used taxpayer-funded systems to blame one political party for the shutdown and credit the other. As Secretary, McMahon would have received Hatch Act training and is responsible for ensuring the Department's communications remain nonpartisan. By allowing official email accounts to be used for partisan messaging, she violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on political activity using government resources.

See: <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/ed-dept-out-of-office-emails-changed-to-blame-democrats-for-shutdown-staff-say/2025/10>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
ED1.png	85,490

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Food and Drug Administration violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to display partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Food and Drug Administration—under Commissioner Marty Makary's leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official homepage. Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected FDA operations or public health services, the agency's website prominently featured the following message:

Mission-critical activities of FDA will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people.

This partisan statement was displayed on the FDA's official website, using taxpayer-funded government platforms to blame the "Democrat-led government shutdown" while crediting the "Trump Administration" for working to reopen the government. Rather than informing the public about which FDA functions would continue during the shutdown or how to access essential public health services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

The FDA's website serves as a critical resource for Americans seeking information about food safety, drug approvals, medical device regulations, and other essential public health matters. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political messaging undermines the agency's public health mission and violates federal regulations prohibiting the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The FDA's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the agency's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and employee time to create and display political statements that

served no legitimate public health purpose related to the FDA's mission of protecting and promoting public health through regulation of food, drugs, and medical products.

Using government resources to display partisan political messaging on an official agency website violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the agency's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about public health services.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Food and Drug Administration violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and display partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of partisan website messaging and determine what federal resources were used for political purposes rather than public health.

The Food and Drug Administration should prioritize protecting public health and safety, rather than advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,

Omar H. Nouredin

Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation

Common Cause

Exhibit A

An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#)

FDA U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION Search Menu

Mission-critical activities of FDA will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people.

[Read More](#)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ First six months of FDA reforms

- ✓ Removing petroleum-based food dyes from the U.S. food supply
- ✓ Facilitating new infant formula options without seed oils and heavy metals
- ✓ Scrutinizing chemicals in food supply, such as BHT, BHA, and phthalates
- ✓ Approved four new natural food dyes
- ✓ Stopping unnecessary animal testing
- ✓ Unleashing cell and gene therapies
- ✓ Launched FDA PreCheck to bring drug manufacturing back the U.S.
- ✓ Fixing opioid medication safety labels to accurately reflect risks
- ✓ Cracking down on misleading pharmaceutical advertisements
- ✓ Addressed conflicts of interest on FDA advisory committees
- ✓ Started publishing FDA rejection letters
- ✓ Banning Chinese gene editing of American cells and DNA
- ✓ Seized \$34 million worth of dangerous, illegal Chinese vapes
- ✓ Consolidating fragmented adverse event databases
- ✓ Began releasing adverse event reports on daily basis
- ✓ Completed first AI-assisted scientific review pilot

....and we're just getting started!

[See Complete List of FDA Reforms](#)

Feedback

October 3, 2025
Ms. Juliet T. Hodgkins
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Inspector General
330 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Inspector General Hodgkins:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Food and Drug Administration, a component of the Department of Health and Human Services. This complaint requests that the HHS Office of Inspector General investigate the FDA's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Food and Drug Administration—under Commissioner Marty Makary's leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official homepage that served no legitimate public health purpose. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity. Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected FDA operations or public health services, the agency's website prominently featured the following message:

Mission-critical activities of FDA will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people.

This partisan statement was displayed on the FDA's official website, using taxpayer-funded government platforms to blame the "Democrat-led government shutdown" while crediting the "Trump Administration" for working to reopen the government. Rather than informing the public about which FDA functions would continue during the shutdown or how to access essential public health services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

The FDA's website serves as a critical resource for Americans seeking information about food safety, drug approvals, medical device regulations, and other essential public health matters. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political messaging undermines the agency's public health mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The FDA's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the agency's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate public health function.

Specific Violations

The FDA's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the FDA website required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly labeling the shutdown as "Democrat-led" while crediting the "Trump Administration" for working to reopen the government, the message was designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about FDA operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The FDA has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the agency's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Commissioner Marty Makary bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the FDA's official website. As the senior official overseeing the agency, he has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that FDA communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the FDA website.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the HHS Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the FDA website;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing FDA policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.



Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Food and Drug Administration that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate public health functions—protecting public health and safety through regulation of food, drugs, and medical products—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A

An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know >](#)

FDA U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION Search Menu

Mission-critical activities of FDA will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people.

[Read More](#)

First six months of FDA reforms

- ✓ Removing petroleum-based food dyes from the U.S. food supply
- ✓ Facilitating new infant formula options without seed oils and heavy metals
- ✓ Scrutinizing chemicals in food supply, such as BHT, BHA, and phthalates
- ✓ Approved four new natural food dyes
- ✓ Stopping unnecessary animal testing
- ✓ Unleashing cell and gene therapies
- ✓ Launched FDA PreCheck to bring drug manufacturing back the U.S.
- ✓ Fixing opioid medication safety labels to accurately reflect risks
- ✓ Cracking down on misleading pharmaceutical advertisements
- ✓ Addressed conflicts of interest on FDA advisory committees
- ✓ Started publishing FDA rejection letters
- ✓ Banning Chinese gene editing of American cells and DNA
- ✓ Seized \$34 million worth of dangerous, illegal Chinese vapes
- ✓ Consolidating fragmented adverse event databases
- ✓ Began releasing adverse event reports on daily basis
- ✓ Completed first AI-assisted scientific review pilot

....and we're just getting started!

[See Complete List of FDA Reforms](#)

Feedback



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Marty

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Makary

Position Title: Commissioner

Department:* Health and Human Services

Agency:* Food and Drug Administration

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of the agency, Makary bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the agency's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the agency head would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given this position as the chief officer of the agency, it is reasonable to conclude that the head of the agency is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Dr. Martin A. Makary, Commissioner of Food and Drugs, is responsible for partisan messaging displayed on the official Food and Drug Administration (FDA) website during the federal government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

The FDA's homepage prominently displayed the message:

"Mission-critical activities of FDA will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people."

This partisan announcement used taxpayer-funded communication systems to blame one political party for the shutdown while simultaneously crediting President Trump and his administration. Such messaging is a misuse of official government resources for partisan purposes.

The violations occurred on the FDA's official website, a publicly accessible government platform. The partisan message was visible to all visitors to the FDA website beginning on or after September 30, 2025.

Given the public nature of the posting, widespread media coverage, and the fact that senior leadership within the FDA would have had knowledge of website content changes, Commissioner Makary had knowledge—or should have had knowledge—of the Hatch Act implications of this messaging.

As Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Dr. Makary is responsible for ensuring that all FDA communications remain nonpartisan and consistent with the ethical obligations of his office. By permitting or directing partisan messaging to be displayed on an official government website, he violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on engaging in political activity using government resources.

See:

<https://www.wftv.com/news/politics/blame-game-is/UJHCVNKOJAZ6BLSUULE2Z5CYKI/>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
FDA1.png	1,378,764

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of Health and Human Services violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to display partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services—under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official homepage. Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected HHS operations or public health services, the Department's website prominently featured the following message:

Mission-critical activities of HHS will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people.

This partisan statement was displayed on the HHS official website, using taxpayer-funded government platforms to blame the "Democrat-led government shutdown" while crediting the "Trump Administration" for working to reopen the government. Rather than informing the public about which HHS functions would continue during the shutdown or how to access essential health services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

The HHS website serves as a critical resource for Americans seeking information about health insurance, Medicare and Medicaid services, public health guidance, and other essential health programs. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political messaging undermines the Department's public health mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The HHS partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and employee time to create and display political statements that served no legitimate public health purpose related to the Department's mission of enhancing the health and well-being of all Americans.

Using government resources to display partisan political messaging on an official agency website violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about health services.

Request for Investigation

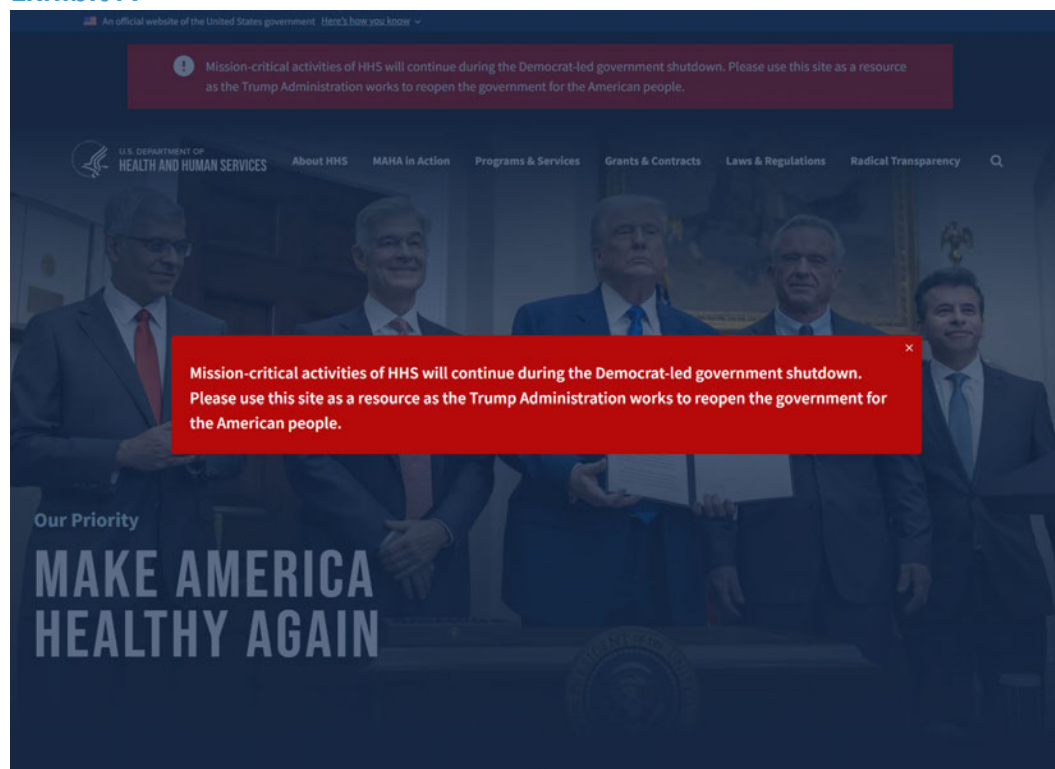
We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of Health and Human Services violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and display partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of partisan website messaging and determine what federal resources were used for political purposes rather than public health.

The Department of Health and Human Services should focus on protecting public health and serving American families, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A



October 3, 2025
Ms. Juliet T. Hodgkins
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Inspector General
330 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Inspector General Hodgkins:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of Health and Human Services. This complaint requests that the HHS Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services—under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official homepage that served no legitimate public health purpose. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity. Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected HHS operations or public health services, the Department's website prominently featured the following message:

Mission-critical activities of HHS will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people.

This partisan statement was displayed on the HHS official website, using taxpayer-funded government platforms to blame the "Democrat-led government shutdown" while crediting the "Trump Administration" for working to reopen the government. Rather than informing the public about which HHS functions would continue during the shutdown or how to access essential health services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

The HHS website serves as a critical resource for Americans seeking information about health insurance, Medicare and Medicaid services, public health guidance, and other essential health programs. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political messaging undermines the Department's public health mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The HHS partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate public health function.

Specific Violations

The HHS actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the HHS website required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly labeling the shutdown as "Democrat-led" while crediting the "Trump Administration" for working to reopen the government, the message was designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about HHS operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The HHS has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the Department of Health and Human Services' official website. As the senior official overseeing the Department, he has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that HHS communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the HHS website.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the HHS Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

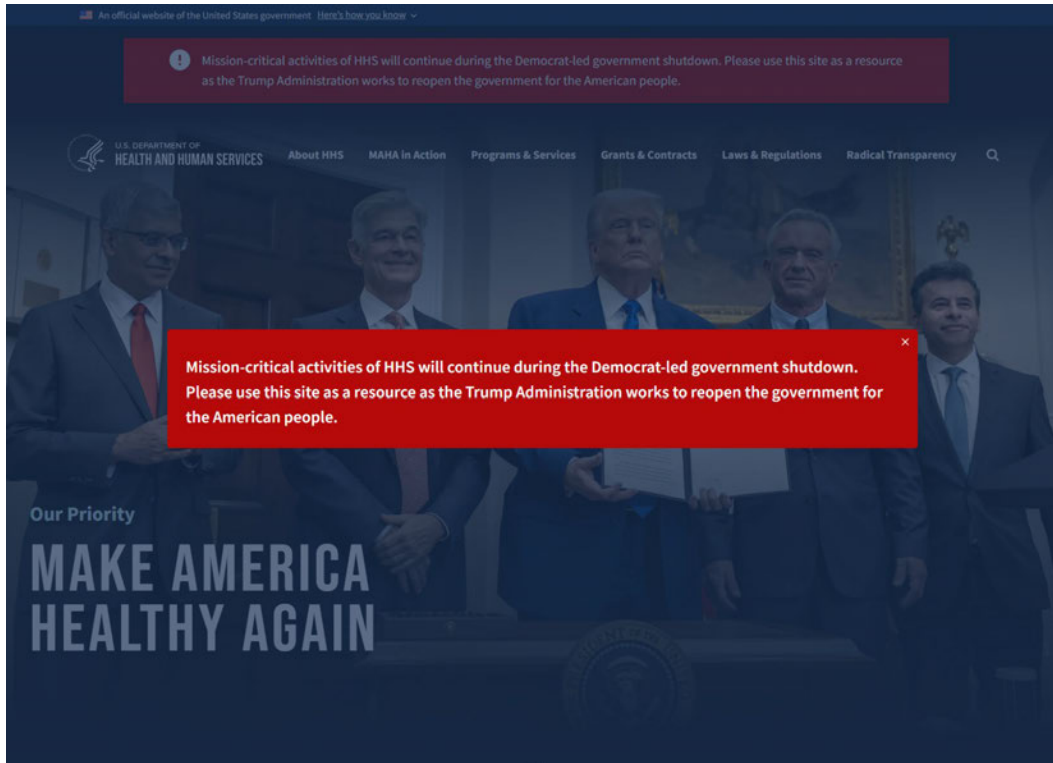
1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the HHS website;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing HHS policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.



Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of Health and Human Services that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate public health functions—protecting public health and serving American families—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Noureldin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Robert

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Kennedy

Position Title: Secretary of Health and Human Services

Department:* Health and Human Services

Agency:* Office Of The Secretary Of Health And Human Services

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Secretary of the Department, Kennedy bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Department's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, she would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given her position as the chief officer of the Department, it is reasonable to conclude that she is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), is responsible for partisan messaging displayed on the official HHS website during the federal government shutdown beginning September 30, 2025.

The HHS homepage displayed the following message:

"Mission-critical activities of HHS will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people."

This message explicitly blames one political party ("Democrat-led") for the shutdown while crediting the Trump Administration, using taxpayer-funded communications systems for partisan purposes. The placement of this language on an official government website, accessible to the general public, turns a neutral government function into a political message.

The violations occurred on the HHS website, a publicly accessible federal platform, beginning on or about September 30, 2025, and continued into October 2025 during the shutdown.

Knowledge of these violations is widespread because the messaging was publicly displayed and reported by national media outlets. As Secretary of HHS, Kennedy would have received Hatch Act training and has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that Department communications remain nonpartisan. By permitting official HHS platforms to be used for partisan blame and credit, Kennedy violated the Hatch Act's prohibition against using government resources for political activity.

See: <https://www.npr.org/2025/09/30/nx-s1-5558393/government-shutdown-trump-ethics-hatch-act>

<https://thehill.com/homenews/house/5535599-garcia-calls-investigation-shutdown-hatch-act/>

<https://www.cnn.com/2025/10/02/politics/federal-workers-government-shutdown-emails-partisan>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
HHS1.png	962,972

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of Housing and Urban Development violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown period, the Department of Housing and Urban Development—under Secretary Scott Turner's leadership—used its official taxpayer-funded website to display explicitly partisan political messages that blamed one political party for the lapse in appropriations.

Before the shutdown began, HUD's official website displayed the following message:

The Radical Left are going to shut down the government and inflict massive pain on the American people unless they get their \$1.5 trillion wish list of demands.

After the shutdown commenced, the Department updated its website with additional partisan messaging:

The Radical Left in Congress shut down the government. HUD will use available resources to help Americans in need.

These partisan statements were publicly displayed on HUD's official government website, using federal resources to assign political blame and advance partisan messaging that served no legitimate operational purpose related to the Department's housing mission. Rather than providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected housing assistance programs or community development services, the messages existed solely to disparage one political party while promoting the Administration's political narrative.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently determined that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

HUD's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and employee time to create and display political statements that

served no legitimate housing-related purpose related to the Department's mission of ensuring access to fair and affordable housing.

Using government resources to display partisan political messaging on an official agency website violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about housing services.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of Housing and Urban Development violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and display partisan political messaging during the government shutdown period. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of these partisan website messages and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than housing-related purposes.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development should focus on providing safe and affordable housing for American families, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

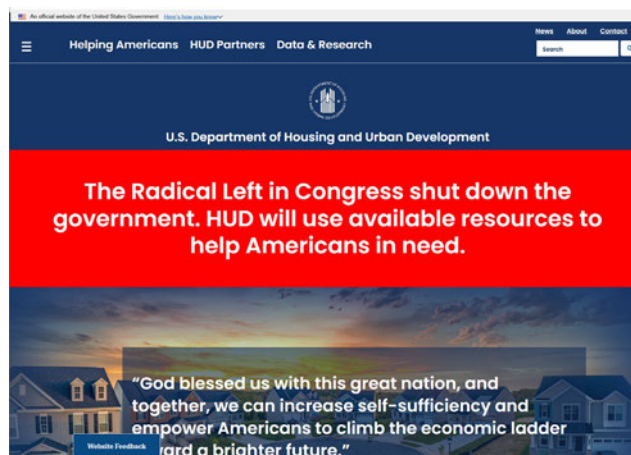
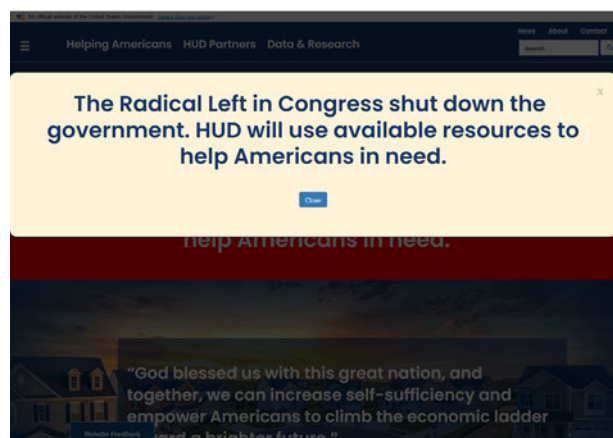
Respectfully,

Omar H. Nouredin

Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation

Common Cause

Exhibit A



October 3, 2025
Mr. Brian D. Harrison
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of the Inspector General
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Acting Inspector General Harrison:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This complaint requests that the HUD Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown period, the Department of Housing and Urban Development—under Secretary Scott Turner's leadership—used its official taxpayer-funded website to display explicitly partisan political messages that served no legitimate housing-related purpose. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity.

Before the shutdown began, HUD's official website displayed the following message:

"The Radical Left are going to shut down the government and inflict massive pain on the American people unless they get their \$1.5 trillion wish list of demands."

After the shutdown commenced, the Department updated its website with additional partisan messaging:

"The Radical Left in Congress shut down the government. HUD will use available resources to help Americans in need."

These partisan statements were publicly displayed on HUD's official government website, using federal resources to assign political blame and advance partisan messaging that served no legitimate operational purpose related to the Department's housing mission. Rather than providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected housing assistance programs or community development services, the messages existed solely to disparage one political party while promoting the Administration's political narrative.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

HUD's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate housing-related function.

Specific Violations

HUD's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the HUD website required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming the "Radical Left" for the shutdown and their "\$1.5 trillion wish list of demands," the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about HUD operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** HUD has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Scott Turner bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's official website. As the senior official overseeing the Department, he has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that HUD communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the HUD website.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the HUD Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

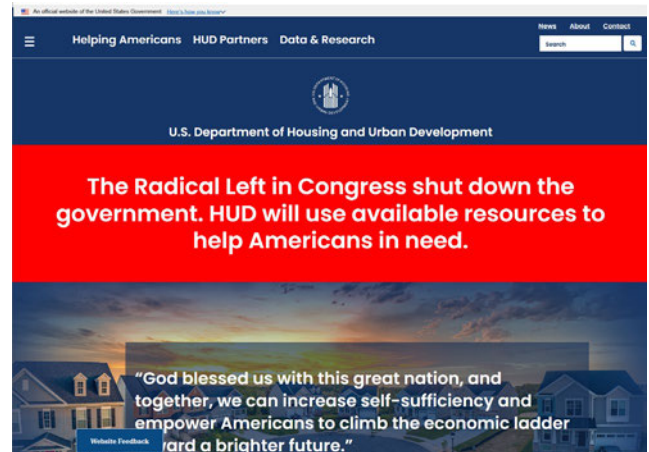
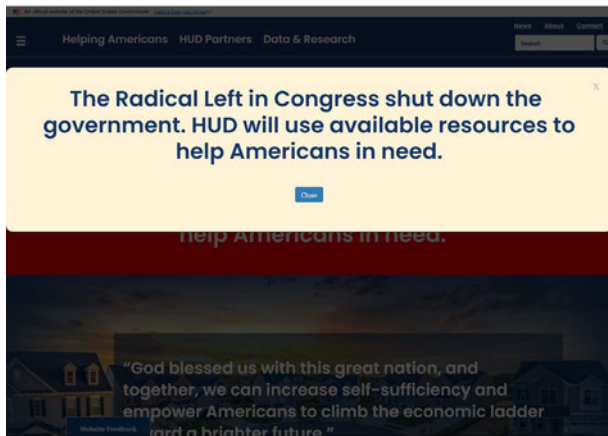
1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the HUD website;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing HUD policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.



Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of Housing and Urban Development that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate housing functions—providing safe and affordable housing for American families—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Scott

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Turner

Position Title: Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Department:* Housing And Urban Development

Agency:* Office Of The Secretary Of Housing And Urban Developmen

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

451 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Office Phone Number: 202-402-3815

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Secretary of the Department, Turner bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Department's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, she would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given her position as the chief officer of the Department, it is reasonable to conclude that she is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Scott Turner, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is responsible for partisan messages posted on the official HUD website during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

Before the shutdown, HUD's official website displayed the following message:

"The Radical Left are going to shut down the government and inflict massive pain on the American people unless they get their \$1.5 trillion wish list of demands." (9/30)

After the shutdown began, the website was updated with a new message:

"The Radical Left in Congress shut down the government. HUD will use available resources to help Americans in need." (10/1)

These partisan statements were publicly displayed on HUD's official, taxpayer-funded website. They used federal resources to blame one political party for the shutdown and to advance partisan messaging favorable to the administration.

As Secretary, Turner would have received Hatch Act training and is responsible for ensuring that HUD communications remain nonpartisan. By allowing official HUD websites to disseminate partisan messages, he violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on using government resources for political activity.

See:

<https://abc7.com/post/government-websites-displaying-messages-blaming-democrats-shutdown/17918723/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/10/government-shutdown-weaponized/684441/>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
HUD1.png	727,421
HUD2.png	1,124,955

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Office of Management and Budget violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Office of Management and Budget—under Director Russell Vought's leadership—used both its official website and federal email systems to distribute explicitly partisan political communications that blamed one political party for the appropriations lapse.

OMB's official website prominently displayed the message:

Democrats have shutdown the government.

This partisan statement was published on a taxpayer-funded government website managed by OMB, using federal resources to assign political blame for the shutdown rather than providing neutral information about the impact on federal operations.

Additionally, according to widespread news reports, OMB distributed partisan emails to staff across multiple federal agencies and Cabinet departments. These official communications included statements such as:

Any lapse in government funding would be forced by Congressional Democrats.

President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports the enactment of H.R. 5371... Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands.

If Congressional Democrats maintain their current posture and refuse to pass a clean Continuing Resolution... federal appropriated funding will lapse.

These communications systematically framed the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats while positioning President Trump and his administration as defenders of government funding. Rather than providing neutral operational information, the messages served purely partisan purposes using official OMB platforms and resources to disparage one political party while implicitly campaigning for the other.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

OMB's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the agency's official website infrastructure, government web servers, email systems, and employee time to create and distribute political statements that served no legitimate budgetary or operational purpose related to OMB's mission of assisting the President in overseeing federal agency implementation of the Administration's vision.

Using government resources to systematically disseminate partisan political messaging across the federal workforce violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed OMB's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about budget and management functions.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Office of Management and Budget violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of both the website messaging and the inter-agency email distribution, and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than budgetary and management purposes.

The Office of Management and Budget should focus on assisting the President with budget preparation and oversight of federal agencies, not coordinating partisan political messaging campaigns at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Noureldin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

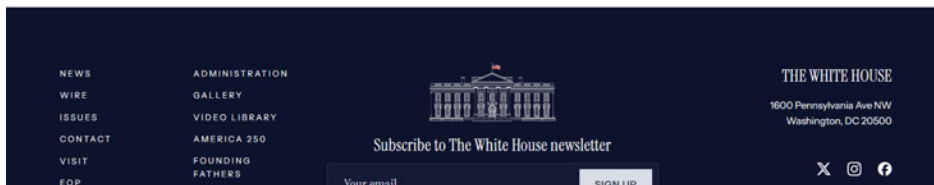


Exhibit A



About

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) serves the President of the United States in overseeing the implementation of his vision across the Executive Branch. Specifically, OMB's mission is to assist the President in meeting his policy, budget, management and regulatory objectives and to fulfill the agency's statutory responsibilities.



October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Office of Management and Budget violated the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Office of Management and Budget—under Director Russell Vought's leadership—used both its official website and federal email systems to distribute explicitly partisan political communications that violated federal restrictions on the use of appropriated funds for lobbying activities. OMB's official website prominently displayed the message:

Democrats have shutdown the government.

This partisan statement was published on a taxpayer-funded government website managed by OMB, using federal resources to assign political blame for the shutdown rather than providing neutral information about the impact on federal operations. Additionally, according to widespread news reports, OMB distributed partisan emails to staff across multiple federal agencies and Cabinet departments. These official communications included statements such as:

Any lapse in government funding would be forced by Congressional Democrats.

President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports the enactment of H.R. 5371... Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands.

If Congressional Democrats maintain their current posture and refuse to pass a clean Continuing Resolution... federal appropriated funding will lapse.

These communications systematically framed the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats while positioning President Trump and his administration as defenders of government funding. Rather than providing neutral operational information, the messages served purely partisan purposes using official OMB platforms and resources to disparage one political party while implicitly campaigning for the other.

Legal Analysis

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

OMB's partisan shutdown messaging violated the Anti-Lobbying Act by using the agency's official website infrastructure, government web servers, email systems, and employee time to create and distribute political statements intended to influence public opinion regarding congressional action on appropriations legislation (specifically H.R. 5371). These messages served no legitimate budgetary or operational purpose related to OMB's mission of assisting the President in overseeing federal agency implementation of the Administration's vision.

By explicitly blaming "Congressional Democrats" for blocking H.R. 5371 and characterizing their opposition as driven by "unrelated policy demands," OMB's communications were designed to pressure Democrats in Congress to change their position on pending appropriations legislation. This constitutes prohibited grassroots lobbying using appropriated federal funds.

Using government resources to systematically disseminate partisan political messaging across the federal workforce violates the Anti-Lobbying Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized lobbying purposes that exceed OMB's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about budget and management functions.

Specific Violations

OMB's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Lobbying Activities:** The creation, approval, and distribution of partisan political content designed to influence Congressional action on H.R. 5371 required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, email systems, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Campaign:** By systematically blaming Democrats for blocking specific legislation while praising President Trump's support for that same legislation, OMB's messages were designed to generate public pressure on Congress to pass H.R. 5371, which constitutes prohibited lobbying activity.
3. **Inter-Agency Distribution:** OMB's distribution of partisan messaging to staff across multiple federal agencies and Cabinet departments transformed the entire federal workforce into a vehicle for advancing partisan political positions, amplifying the Anti-Lobbying Act violations across the executive branch.



Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Office of Management and Budget violated the Anti-Lobbying Act by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute partisan political messaging designed to influence Congressional action during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine:

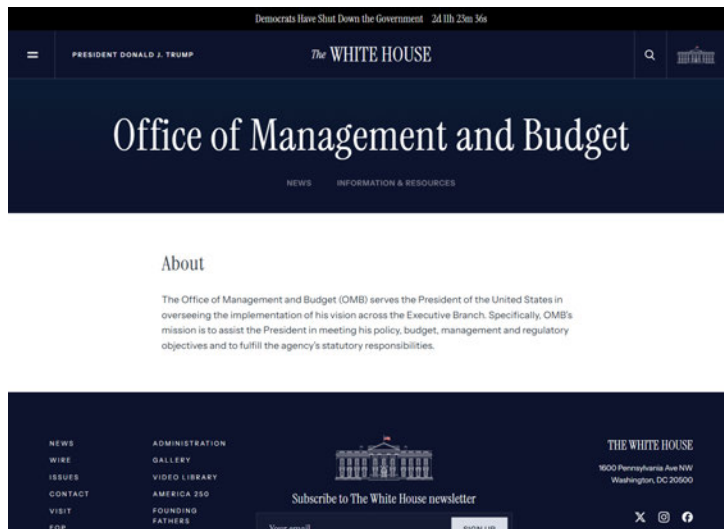
1. The authorization and implementation of both the website messaging and the inter-agency email distribution;
2. What federal resources were used for lobbying activities rather than legitimate budgetary and management purposes;
3. The scope of OMB's distribution of partisan messaging across federal agencies;
4. The cost to taxpayers of government resources used for prohibited lobbying activities; and
5. Whether OMB has policies and procedures in place to prevent violations of the Anti-Lobbying Act.

The Office of Management and Budget should focus on assisting the President with budget preparation and oversight of federal agencies, rather than coordinating partisan political lobbying campaigns at taxpayer expense, which is a violation of federal law.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Noureldin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Russell

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Vought

Position Title: Director of the Office of Management and Budget

Department:* Other/Independent Agency

Agency:* Office Of Management And Budget

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of the agency, Vought bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the agency's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the agency head would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given this position as the chief officer of the agency, it is reasonable to conclude that the head of the agency is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

The subject of this complaint is Russell Vought, Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, OMB engaged in partisan communications that constitute violations of the Hatch Act's prohibition against using official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

On OMB's official website, a message was displayed stating:
"Democrats have shutdown the government."

This language explicitly blames one political party for the shutdown while framing the administration's position in a favorable light. The message was published on a taxpayer-funded government website managed by OMB, a federal agency whose official communications are required to remain nonpartisan.

In addition to the website posting, OMB distributed partisan emails to staff across multiple federal agencies and Cabinet departments. According to news reporting and screenshots provided, the emails came from the White House Office of Management and Budget and included the following statements:

- "Any lapse in government funding would be forced by Congressional Democrats."
- "President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports the enactment of H.R. 5371... Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands."
- "If Congressional Democrats maintain their current posture and refuse to pass a clean Continuing Resolution... federal appropriated funding will lapse."

These communications framed the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats, while positioning President Trump and his administration as defenders of government funding. This language is explicitly partisan, using official OMB platforms and resources to disparage one political party and implicitly campaign for the other.

The violations occurred beginning on September 30, 2025, and continued throughout the duration of the shutdown. Because the website message was publicly accessible and the staff emails were sent across the federal workforce, the violations were widely disseminated and known to the public, government employees, and other agencies.

As Director of OMB, Russell Vought bears ultimate responsibility for the content and



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

messaging disseminated by his office. He would have received Hatch Act training and is obligated to ensure that communications from OMB remain nonpartisan. By allowing and directing his agency to disseminate these partisan statements, Vought violated the Hatch Act.

See:

<https://www.npr.org/2025/09/30/nx-s1-5558393/government-shutdown-trump-ethics-hatch-act>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
OMB1.png	214,580

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Small Business Administration violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Small Business Administration—under Administrator Kelly Loeffler's leadership—used both its official website and federal employee email systems to distribute explicitly partisan political communications that blamed one political party for the appropriations lapse.

The SBA's official website prominently displayed a "Special Announcement" that stated:

Senate Democrats voted to block a clean federal funding bill (H.R. 5371), leading to a government shutdown that is preventing the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) from serving America's 36 million small businesses. Every day that Senate Democrats continue to oppose a clean funding bill, they are stopping an estimated 320 small businesses from accessing \$170 million in SBA-guaranteed funding... The agency is executing its Lapse Plan and as soon as the shutdown is over, we are prepared to immediately return to the record-breaking services we were providing under the leadership of the Trump Administration.

Additionally, according to widespread news reporting, the SBA systematically replaced employee out-of-office auto-reply messages with partisan content without the employees' knowledge or consent. These mandatory messages read:

I am out of office for the foreseeable future because Senate Democrats voted to block a clean federal funding bill (H.R. 5371), leading to a government shutdown that is preventing the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) from serving America's 36 million small businesses.

These communications were distributed through taxpayer-funded government systems to assign political blame to "Senate Democrats" while crediting the "Trump Administration" with providing "record-breaking services." Rather than providing neutral information about which SBA programs would continue or how small businesses could access available services, the messages served purely partisan political purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The SBA's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the agency's official website infrastructure, government web servers, email systems, and employee time to create and distribute political statements that served no legitimate small business assistance purpose related to the SBA's mission of supporting America's small businesses through loans, loan guarantees, and business development programs.

Using government resources to systematically distribute partisan political messaging through both official websites and mandatory employee auto-replies violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the agency's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about small business services.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Small Business Administration violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of both the website messaging and the mandatory employee email auto-replies, and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than small business assistance purposes.


The Small Business Administration should focus on supporting America's small businesses, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.


Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause



Exhibit A

 An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#)


 **Special announcement**

Senate Democrats voted to block a clean federal funding bill (H.R. 5371), leading to a government shutdown that is preventing the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) from serving America's 36 million small businesses.

Every day that Senate Democrats continue to oppose a clean funding bill, they are stopping an estimated 320 small businesses from accessing \$170 million in SBA-guaranteed funding.


As a result of the shutdown, we wanted to notify you that many of our services supporting small businesses are currently unavailable. The agency is executing its Lapse Plan and as soon as the shutdown is over, we are prepared to immediately return to the record-breaking services we were providing under the leadership of the Trump Administration.








If you need disaster assistance, please visit sba.gov/disaster.


 **U.S. Small Business Administration**

[Español](#)

[For Partners](#) | [Newsroom](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Other languages](#)



[Business Guide](#)  | [Funding Programs](#)  | [Federal Contracting](#)  | [Learning Platform](#)  | [Local Assistance](#)  | [Priorities](#)  | [About SBA](#) 



Need funding for your small business?

[Learn about SBA loans](#)



October 3, 2025
Mr. Sheldon Shoemaker
Deputy Inspector General
Small Business Administration
Office of Inspector General
409 3rd St. SW, Suite 7150
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Deputy Inspector General Shoemaker:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Small Business Administration. This complaint requests that the SBA Office of Inspector General investigate the Agency's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Small Business Administration—under the leadership of Administrator Kelly Loeffler—used both its official website and federal employee email systems to distribute explicitly partisan political communications that served no legitimate purpose in assisting small businesses. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity. The SBA's official website prominently displayed a "Special Announcement" that stated:

Senate Democrats voted to block a clean federal funding bill (H.R. 5371), leading to a government shutdown that is preventing the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) from serving America's 36 million small businesses. Every day that Senate Democrats continue to oppose a clean funding bill, they are stopping an estimated 320 small businesses from accessing \$170 million in SBA-guaranteed funding... The agency is executing its Lapse Plan and as soon as the shutdown is over, we are prepared to immediately return to the record-breaking services we were providing under the leadership of the Trump Administration.

Additionally, according to widespread news reporting, the SBA systematically replaced employee out-of-office auto-reply messages with partisan content without the employees' knowledge or consent. These mandatory messages read:

I am out of office for the foreseeable future because Senate Democrats voted to block a clean federal funding bill (H.R. 5371), leading to a government shutdown

that is preventing the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) from serving America's 36 million small businesses.

These communications were distributed through taxpayer-funded government systems to assign political blame to "Senate Democrats" while crediting the "Trump Administration" with providing "record-breaking services." Rather than providing neutral information about which SBA programs would continue or how small businesses could access available services, the messages served purely partisan political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The SBA's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the agency's official website infrastructure, government web servers, email systems, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate small business assistance function.

Specific Violations

The SBA's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on both the SBA website and through systematic replacement of employee email auto-replies required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, email systems, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Senate Democrats" for blocking specific House legislation (H.R. 5371) while praising the "Trump Administration's record-breaking services," the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about SBA operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The SBA has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the agency's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Administrator Kelly Loeffler bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the SBA's official website and distributed through the agency's email systems. As the senior official overseeing the agency, she has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that SBA communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.



Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the SBA website and distributed through employee email systems.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the SBA Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on both the SBA website and through employee email systems;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing SBA policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Small Business Administration that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate small business assistance functions—supporting America's 36 million small businesses through loans, loan guarantees, and business development programs—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

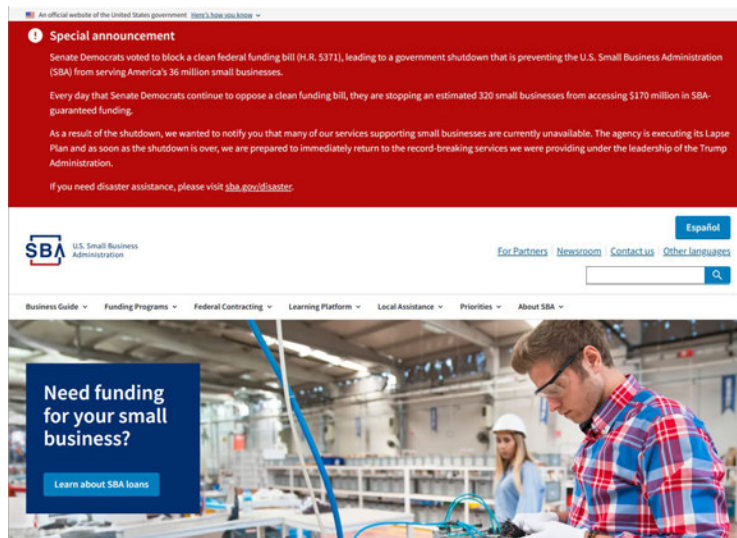
Respectfully,

Omar H. Nouredin

Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation

Common Cause

Exhibit A



The New York Times, *Federal Agencies Use Official Websites to Blame Democrats for Shutdown*, (October 1, 2025): <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/01/us/politics/furlough-small-business-administration-emails.html>

CNN, *Out-of-office messages blaming Democrats for shutdown sent on behalf of some federal workers without their consent*, (October 2, 2025): <https://www.cnn.com/2025/10/02/politics/federal-workers-government-shutdown-emails-partisan>





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Kelly

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Loeffler

Position Title: SBA Administrator

Department:* Other/Independent Agency

Agency:* Small Business Administration

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

409 3rd St., SW
Washington, DC 20416

Office Phone Number: 800-827-5722

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Administrator of the SBA, Loffler bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the SBA's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, she would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given her position as the chief officer of the SBA, it is reasonable to conclude that she is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.

Description of alleged violation:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Kelly Loeffler, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), is responsible for partisan messages disseminated through the SBA's official website and employee out-of-office emails during the government shutdown beginning September 30, 2025.

On the SBA website, a "Special Announcement" stated:

"Senate Democrats voted to block a clean federal funding bill (H.R. 5371), leading to a government shutdown that is preventing the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) from serving America's 36 million small businesses. Every day that Senate Democrats continue to oppose a clean funding bill, they are stopping an estimated 320 small businesses from accessing \$170 million in SBA-guaranteed funding. As a result of the shutdown, we wanted to notify you that many of our services supporting small businesses are currently unavailable. The agency is executing its Lapse Plan and as soon as the shutdown is over, we are prepared to immediately return to the record-breaking services we were providing under the leadership of the Trump Administration."

Additionally, SBA employee out-of-office messages were changed to include similar partisan language, without employee consent. One such auto-reply read:

"I am out of office for the foreseeable future because Senate Democrats voted to block a clean federal funding bill (H.R. 5371), leading to a government shutdown that is preventing the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) from serving America's 36 million small businesses."

These messages, distributed on the official SBA website and through federal employee email accounts, used taxpayer-funded systems to blame one political party for the shutdown while praising another.

The violations occurred beginning September 30, 2025, and are widely documented in publicly accessible sources, including the SBA's own website and major media outlets. As Administrator, Loeffler would have received Hatch Act training and is responsible for ensuring that SBA communications remain nonpartisan. By permitting official resources to be used for partisan messaging, she violated the Hatch Act.

See: <https://apnews.com/article/trump-shutdown-blame-agencies-websites-hatch-act-ff5dab4e9a3a74af0c94fd9b184d9311>



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/01/us/politics/furlough-small-business-administration-emails.html>

<https://www.cnn.com/2025/10/02/politics/federal-workers-government-shutdown-emails-partisan>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
SBA1.png	1,284,405

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT
MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT
YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Social Security Administration violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Social Security Administration—under the leadership of Commissioner Frank Bisignano—distributed, according to widespread news reports, partisan political communications to SSA employees through official government email systems. These messages used taxpayer-funded federal resources to advance partisan political positions rather than provide neutral operational information about the shutdown's impact on Social Security services.

The SSA emails explicitly assigned political blame for the appropriations lapse, stating that "any lapse in appropriations was forced by Congressional Democrats," while endorsing President Trump's political position by declaring that

President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports enactment of H.R. 5371." The messages further stated: "Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands."

These communications went beyond neutral operational updates about which SSA functions would continue during the shutdown. Instead, they systematically framed the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats while crediting President Trump and Republicans with attempting to keep the government open. Rather than informing employees and the public about how to access Social Security benefits or which services remained available, the messages served purely partisan political purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The SSA's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the agency's official email infrastructure, government servers, and employee time to create and distribute political statements that served

no legitimate operational purpose related to the agency's mission of delivering Social Security benefits to the American people.

Using government resources to distribute partisan political messaging through official agency email systems violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the agency's authorized authority for legitimate operational communications related to Social Security services.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Social Security Administration violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of these partisan email communications and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than Social Security operational purposes.

The Social Security Administration should focus on delivering benefits and services to the millions of Americans who depend on Social Security, rather than advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause



October 3, 2025
Ms. Michelle L. Anderson
Acting Inspector General
Social Security Administration
Office of the Inspector General
PO Box 17785
Baltimore, Maryland 21235

Dear Acting Inspector General Anderson:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Social Security Administration. This complaint requests that the SSA Office of Inspector General investigate the Agency's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Social Security Administration—under the leadership of Commissioner Frank Bisignano—distributed, according to widespread news reports, partisan political communications to SSA employees through official government email systems. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity.

These messages used taxpayer-funded federal resources to advance partisan political positions rather than provide neutral operational information about the shutdown's impact on Social Security services. The SSA emails explicitly assigned political blame for the appropriations lapse, stating that

"... any lapse in appropriations was forced by Congressional Democrats," while endorsing President Trump's political position by declaring that "President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports enactment of H.R. 5371." The messages further stated: "Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands."

These communications went beyond neutral operational updates about which SSA functions would continue during the shutdown. Instead, they systematically framed the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats while crediting President Trump and Republicans with attempting to keep the government open. Rather than informing employees and the public about how to access Social Security benefits or which services remained available, the messages served purely partisan political purposes.

The Social Security Administration's email systems serve critical functions for communicating with the millions of Americans who depend on Social Security benefits and services. Using these taxpayer-funded communication platforms for partisan political messaging undermines the agency's mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The SSA's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the agency's official email infrastructure, government servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate Social Security function.

Specific Violations

The SSA's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and distribution of partisan political content through SSA employee email systems required the use of federal employee time, government email infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Congressional Democrats" for blocking specific House legislation (H.R. 5371) while praising President Trump's position, the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about SSA operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The SSA has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the agency's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Commissioner Frank Bisignano bears ultimate responsibility for the content distributed through official SSA communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the agency, he has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that SSA communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging distributed through official SSA email systems.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the SSA Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and distribution of the partisan political messaging through SSA email systems;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and distribute this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;



4. Reviewing SSA policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Social Security Administration that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate functions—delivering benefits and services to the millions of Americans who depend on Social Security—rather than advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A

NPR, *Trump administration uses taxpayer dollars to blame Democrats for government shutdown*, (October 1, 2025): <https://www.npr.org/2025/09/30/nx-s1-5558393/government-shutdown-trump-ethics-hatch-act>





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Frank

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Bisignano

Position Title: Commissioner

Department:* Other/Independent Agency

Agency:* Social Security Administration

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

6401 Security Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21235

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of the agency, Bisignano bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the agency's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the agency head would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given this position as the head of the agency, it is reasonable to conclude that the head of the agency is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

The subject of this complaint is Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (SSA).

On September 30, 2025, at the onset of the federal government shutdown, SSA distributed partisan messages to employees through its official government email systems. The emails stated that any lapse in appropriations was "forced by Congressional Democrats" and explicitly supported President Trump's position, declaring that "President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports enactment of H.R. 5371." The messages further stated: "Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands."

These messages used taxpayer-funded federal resources to disparage one political party and endorse the policy position of another. They went beyond neutral operational updates and instead framed the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats while crediting President Trump and Republicans with attempting to keep the government open.

The violations occurred through SSA's internal communication systems and were distributed nationwide to agency employees beginning September 30, 2025, and in the days following. Because these messages were part of uniform shutdown communications circulated across multiple agencies, they were known to SSA leadership, employees, and the public, and were issued under the guidance of the White House Office of Management and Budget.

As Commissioner, Frank Bisignano bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring SSA communications remain nonpartisan. By permitting or authorizing partisan messages to be distributed on SSA's official channels, he violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on using government resources for partisan political activity.

Sources:

NPR (Sept. 30, 2025): <https://www.npr.org/2025/09/30/nx-s1-5558393/government-shutdown-trump-ethics-hatch-act>

The Hill (Sept. 30, 2025): <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5530094-federal-emails-shutdown-democrats/>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
-----------	----------------

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the U.S. Department of Agriculture violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to display partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture—under Secretary Brooke Rollins' leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official homepage. Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected agricultural services or food assistance programs, the Department's website prominently featured the following message:

Due to the Radical Left Democrat shutdown, this government website will not be updated during the funding lapse. President Trump has made it clear he wants to keep the government open and support those who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people.

This partisan statement was displayed on the USDA's official taxpayer-funded website, using federal resources to assign political blame to the "Radical Left Democrat shutdown" while crediting President Trump for wanting to support agricultural workers and families. Rather than informing the public about which USDA programs would continue during the shutdown or how farmers and families could access available services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

The USDA website serves as a critical resource for American farmers, ranchers, rural communities, and families seeking information about food assistance programs, agricultural loans, food safety guidelines, and rural development services. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political messaging undermines the Department's agricultural mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The USDA's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and employee time to create and display political statements that served no legitimate agricultural purpose related to the Department's mission of providing leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues.

Using government resources to display partisan political messaging on an official agency website violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about agricultural services.

Request for Investigation

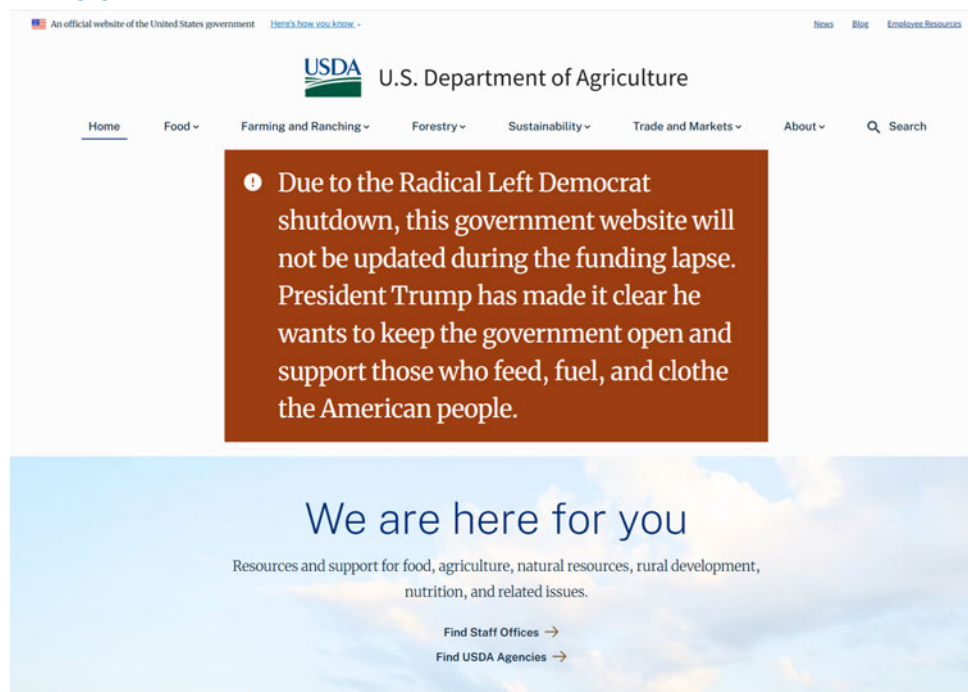
We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the U.S. Department of Agriculture violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and display partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of partisan website messaging and determine what federal resources were used for political purposes rather than agricultural ones.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture should focus on supporting American farmers, ranchers, and families, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Noureldin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A



October 3, 2025
Ms. Janet M. Sorensen
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of Inspector General (OIG)
Room 117-W Jamie Whitten Bldg
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Acting Inspector General Sorensen:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This complaint requests that the USDA Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture—under Secretary Brooke Rollins' leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official homepage that served no legitimate agricultural purpose. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity.

Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected agricultural services or food assistance programs, the Department's website prominently featured the following message:

Due to the Radical Left Democrat shutdown, this government website will not be updated during the funding lapse. President Trump has made it clear he wants to keep the government open and support those who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people.

This partisan statement was displayed on the USDA's official taxpayer-funded website, using federal resources to assign political blame to the "Radical Left Democrat shutdown" while crediting President Trump for wanting to support agricultural workers and families. Rather than informing the public about which USDA programs would continue during the shutdown or how farmers and families could access available services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

The USDA website serves as a critical resource for American farmers, ranchers, rural communities, and families seeking information about food assistance programs, agricultural loans, food safety guidelines, and rural development services. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political messaging undermines the Department's agricultural mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The USDA's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate agricultural function.

Specific Violations

The USDA's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the USDA website required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming the "Radical Left Democrat shutdown" while crediting President Trump for supporting those "who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people," the message was designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about USDA operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The USDA has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Brooke Rollins bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the Department of Agriculture's official website. As the senior official overseeing the Department, she has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that USDA communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the USDA website.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the USDA Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the USDA website;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;

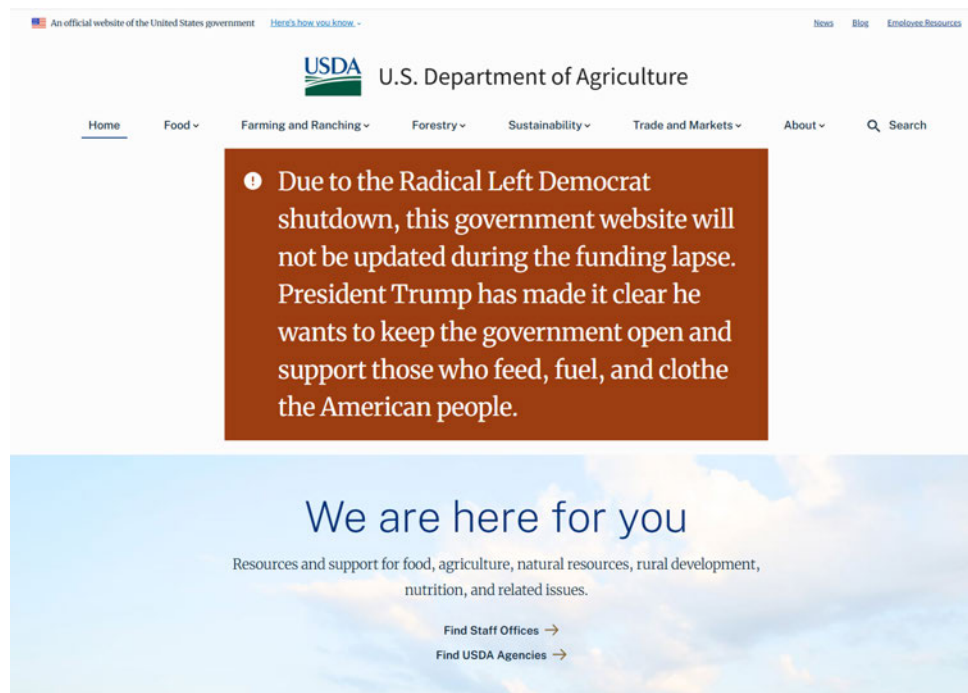


4. Reviewing USDA policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of Agriculture that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate agricultural functions—providing leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Noureldin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title: Secretary

Subject's First Name:* Brooke

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Rollins

Position Title: Secretary of Agriculture

Department:* Agriculture

Agency:* Office Of The Secretary Of Agriculture

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Office Phone Number: 202-720-6270

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address: feedback@usda.gov

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As Secretary of the Department, Rollins bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the Department's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, she would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given her position as the chief officer of the Department, it is reasonable to conclude that she is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Brooke Rollins, Secretary of Agriculture, is responsible for partisan messaging displayed on the official U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) website during the government shutdown beginning September 30, 2025.

The USDA homepage displayed the following message:

"Due to the Radical Left Democrat shutdown, this government website will not be updated during the funding lapse. President Trump has made it clear he wants to keep the government open and support those who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people."

This statement directly blames one political party for the shutdown and praises the President and his party, using taxpayer-funded platforms for partisan purposes. The language went beyond neutral notification of a lapse in appropriations and instead adopted campaign-style rhetoric.

The violation occurred on the official USDA website (usda.gov) on or about October 1, 2025, during the federal government shutdown.

Because the partisan statement appeared on USDA's official, publicly accessible website, the violation was widespread and readily visible to the general public, the media, USDA employees, and other government officials. Secretary Rollins, as the agency head, is responsible for ensuring that Department communications comply with federal ethics laws. As a Senate-confirmed political appointee, she would have received Hatch Act training and is accountable for the content published under her authority.

By allowing USDA's official website to host and disseminate partisan attacks and endorsements, Secretary Rollins violated the Hatch Act's prohibition on engaging in political activity using government resources.

See: <https://abc7.com/post/government-websites-displaying-messages-blaming-democrats-shutdown/17918723/>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
USDA1.png	395,572

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the U.S. Department of the Treasury violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to display partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the U.S. Department of the Treasury—under Secretary Scott Bessent's leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official website. Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected Treasury operations or economic services, the Department's homepage prominently featured the following message:

The radical left has chosen to shut down the United States government in the name of reckless spending and obstructionism. As a result, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's websites will only be sporadically updated until this shutdown concludes.

This partisan statement was displayed on the Treasury's official taxpayer-funded website, using federal resources to assign political blame to the "radical left" for the appropriations lapse. Rather than informing the public about which Treasury functions would continue during the shutdown or how citizens could access essential financial services, the message served purely partisan political purposes by disparaging one political party while promoting the Administration's narrative about "reckless spending and obstructionism."

Additionally, according to widespread news reporting, Treasury distributed similar partisan messaging internally to employees, framing the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats and the "radical left" through official government communication channels.

The Treasury Department's website serves as a vital resource for Americans and international partners seeking information on economic policy, financial sanctions, tax guidance, and other key Treasury functions. Using this official platform to disseminate inflammatory partisan political messaging undermines the Department's economic mission and violates federal restrictions on using government resources for political purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The Treasury Department's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, email systems, and employee time to create and display political statements that served no legitimate economic purpose related to the Department's mission of maintaining a strong economy and creating economic opportunity.

Using government resources to display inflammatory partisan political messaging on official agency platforms violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about Treasury services.

Request for Investigation

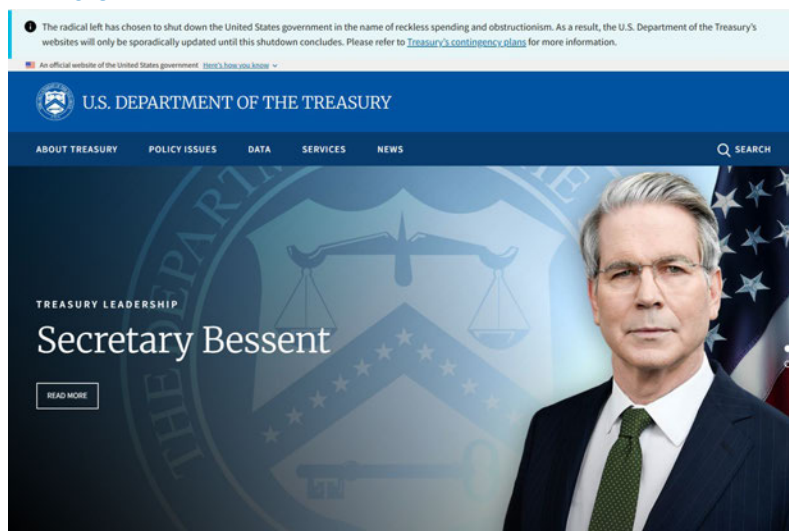
We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the U.S. Department of the Treasury violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and display partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of both the website messaging and internal employee communications, and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than economic policy purposes.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury should focus on maintaining economic stability and serving the American people, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A



October 3, 2025
Mr. Loren J. Sciurba
Deputy Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Treasury
Office of Inspector General (OIG)
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Deputy Inspector General Sciurba:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the U.S. Department of the Treasury. This complaint requests that the Treasury Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the U.S. Department of the Treasury—under Secretary Scott Bessent's leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official website that served no legitimate economic policy purpose. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity. Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected Treasury operations or economic services, the Department's homepage prominently featured the following message:

The radical left has chosen to shut down the United States government in the name of reckless spending and obstructionism. As a result, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's websites will only be sporadically updated until this shutdown concludes.

This partisan statement was displayed on the Treasury's official taxpayer-funded website, using federal resources to assign political blame to the "radical left" for the appropriations lapse while promoting the Administration's narrative about "reckless spending and obstructionism." Rather than informing the public about which Treasury functions would continue during the shutdown or how citizens could access essential financial services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

Additionally, according to widespread news reporting, the Treasury distributed similar partisan messaging internally to employees, framing the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats and the "radical left" through official government communication channels.

The Treasury Department's website serves as a vital resource for Americans and international partners seeking information on economic policy, financial sanctions, tax guidance, and other key Treasury functions. Using this official platform to disseminate inflammatory partisan political messaging undermines the Department's economic mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The Treasury's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, email systems, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate economic policy function.

Specific Violations

The Treasury's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on both the Treasury website and through internal employee communications required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, email systems, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming the "radical left" for the shutdown and characterizing it as driven by "reckless spending and obstructionism," the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about Treasury operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The Treasury has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Scott Bessent bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the Department of the Treasury's official website and distributed through the agency's communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the Department, he has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that Treasury communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the Treasury website and distributed through internal communications.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the Treasury Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on both the Treasury website and through internal employee communications;



2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing Treasury policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of the Treasury that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate economic purposes—maintaining a strong economy and creating economic opportunities—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A



The Hill, *Federal employees told Democrats to blame for shutdown in 'highly inappropriate' email*, (September 30, 2025): <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5530094-federal-emails-shutdown-democrats/>





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Scott

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Bessent

Position Title: Secretary of the Treasury

Department:* Treasury

Agency:* Other

Agency subcomponent: Office of the Secretary

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of the agency, Bessent bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the agency's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the agency head would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given this position as the chief officer of the agency, it is reasonable to conclude that the head of the agency is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

Scott Bessent, Secretary of the Treasury, is responsible for partisan messages displayed on the official Department of the Treasury website and sent to employees during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

On the Treasury Department's public-facing website, a banner declared:

"The radical left has chosen to shut down the United States government in the name of reckless spending and obstructionism. As a result, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's websites will only be sporadically updated until this shutdown concludes. Please refer to Treasury's contingency plans for more information."

In addition, Treasury distributed similar partisan messages internally to employees, framing the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats and the "radical left." These communications used taxpayer-funded platforms to disparage one political party while implicitly supporting another, in direct violation of the Hatch Act's prohibition on partisan political activity using government resources.

The violations occurred beginning on September 30, 2025, and continued during the government shutdown. Because the postings were on Treasury's official website and internal systems, they were publicly accessible and widely distributed, making the violations known to the public, Treasury employees, and other federal agencies.

As Secretary of the Treasury, Scott Bessent would have received Hatch Act training and bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring that his Department's communications remain nonpartisan. By allowing the Treasury's official website and employee communications to be used for partisan political messaging, he violated the Hatch Act.

See:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/01/us/politics/furlough-small-business-administration-emails.html>

<https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5530094-federal-emails-shutdown-democrats/>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
USTD1.png	1,330,076

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Department of Veterans Affairs violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Veterans Affairs—under Secretary Douglas Collins' leadership—used official taxpayer-funded communication channels to distribute explicitly partisan political statements that assigned blame to one political party for the appropriations lapse.

According to news reports, the VA distributed a weekly newsletter to veterans containing partisan messaging that blamed "Senate Democrats for the federal shutdown," stating they were blocking a stopgap bill to fund the government "due to unrelated policy demands." The newsletter then proceeded to list disruptions to veterans' services and resources, attributing these disruptions to Democrats.

These partisan communications were disseminated through official VA email newsletters, utilizing government resources and infrastructure to reach veterans, VA staff, and the general public. Rather than providing neutral information about which VA services would continue during the shutdown or how veterans could access available benefits and care, the messaging served purely partisan purposes by disparaging one political party while implicitly supporting another.

The Department of Veterans Affairs serves millions of American veterans who depend on VA services for healthcare, disability benefits, education assistance, and other critical support. Using official VA communications to advance partisan political messaging undermines the Department's mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The VA's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official newsletter system, government email infrastructure, and employee time to create and distribute political statements that served no legitimate veterans services purpose related to the Department's mission of caring for those who have served our nation.

Using government resources to distribute partisan political messaging through official agency communications violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about veterans' services.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of Veterans Affairs violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of these partisan newsletter communications and determine what federal resources were used for political purposes rather than for veterans' services.

The Department of Veterans Affairs should focus on serving the veterans who have sacrificed for our nation, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause



October 3, 2025
Ms. Cheryl L. Mason
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Inspector General
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Inspector General Mason:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs. This complaint requests that the VA Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Veterans Affairs—under the leadership of Secretary Douglas Collins—used official taxpayer-funded communication channels to distribute explicitly partisan political statements that served no legitimate purpose in veterans' services. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity.

According to news reports, the VA distributed a weekly newsletter to veterans containing partisan messaging that blamed "Senate Democrats for the federal shutdown," stating they were blocking a stopgap bill to fund the government "due to unrelated policy demands." The newsletter then proceeded to list disruptions to veterans' services and resources, attributing these disruptions to Democrats.

These partisan communications were disseminated through official VA email newsletters, utilizing government resources and infrastructure to reach veterans, VA staff, and the general public. Rather than providing neutral information about which VA services would continue during the shutdown or how veterans could access available benefits and care, the messaging served purely partisan purposes by disparaging one political party while implicitly supporting another.

The Department of Veterans Affairs serves millions of American veterans who depend on VA services for healthcare, disability benefits, education assistance, and other critical support. Using official VA communications to advance partisan political messaging undermines the Department's mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement,

telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The VA's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official newsletter system, government email infrastructure, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate veterans services function.

Specific Violations

The VA's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and distribution of partisan political content through VA newsletters required the use of federal employee time, government email infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Senate Democrats" for blocking a stopgap funding bill due to "unrelated policy demands," the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about VA operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The VA has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

Responsible Officials

Secretary Douglas Collins bears ultimate responsibility for the content published through official VA communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the Department, he has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that VA communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging distributed through official VA newsletters.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the VA Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:

1. Determining who authorized the creation and distribution of the partisan political messaging through VA newsletters;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and distribute this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing VA policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of Veterans Affairs that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate veterans services functions—caring for those who served our nation with honor—not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.



Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A

WFTV9, *The blame game is on at federal agencies, where political messages fault Democrats for the shutdown*, (October 2, 2025): <https://www.wftv.com/news/politics/blame-game-is/UJHCVNKOJAZ6BLSUULE2Z5CYKI/>





COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Douglas

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Collins

Position Title: Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Department:* Veterans Affairs

Agency:* Office Of The Secretary

Agency subcomponent:

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of the agency, Collins bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring the agency's compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the agency head would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to agency counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given this position as the chief officer of the agency, it is reasonable to conclude that the head of the agency is fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level office.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

The subject of this complaint is Douglas A. Collins, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who is responsible for partisan communications issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

The VA used official, taxpayer-funded communication channels, including newsletters, to distribute explicitly partisan statements blaming one political party for the shutdown.

As news reports indicate, in a weekly VA newsletter emailed to veterans, the Department blamed Senate Democrats for the federal shutdown, stating they were blocking a stopgap bill to fund the government "due to unrelated policy demands." The newsletter then listed disruptions to veterans' services and resources, attributing them to Democrats.

The violations occurred beginning on September 30, 2025, and continued during the federal government shutdown. Because the partisan messages were distributed via email newsletters, the violations were widely accessible to veterans, VA staff, and the general public.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Douglas A. Collins is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Hatch Act, including preventing partisan political messaging in official government communications. By permitting and overseeing the dissemination of these partisan messages, Secretary Collins used his office and taxpayer resources to disparage one political party while implicitly supporting another, in direct violation of the Hatch Act's prohibition on partisan political activity using official authority or resources.

See

<https://www.wftv.com/news/politics/blame-game-is/UJHCVNKOJAZ6BLSUULE2Z5CYKI/>

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
-----------	----------------

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING. REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the White House Communications Office violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the White House Communications Office—under Director Steven Cheung's leadership—systematically used taxpayer-funded official platforms to advance partisan political messaging that blamed one political party for the appropriations lapse.

The White House's official website prominently displayed a banner declaring "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government". It featured a live ticker counting the seconds by the second, showing the length of time "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government." These partisan statements were displayed on the official White House website, using federal resources to assign political blame rather than providing neutral information about government operations during the shutdown.

The White House press office embedded partisan messaging into official email auto-replies sent to members of the public, the press, and other stakeholders. These auto-replies referenced "staff shortages resulting from the Democrat Shutdown," using official government communication channels to distribute partisan political statements.

Additionally, callers to the White House public comment line encountered partisan political voicemail recordings created by Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, who repeated partisan talking points, including the claim that "Democrats forced the government shutdown fight because they want to fund health care for illegal immigrants."

The White House's official social media accounts, maintained by the Digital Office within the Communications Office, amplified similar partisan messaging across multiple platforms, using taxpayer-funded resources to advance political narratives rather than provide neutral government information.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The White House Communications Office's systematic partisan messaging violated these restrictions by using official government platforms, website infrastructure, email systems, telephone systems, and social media accounts to create and distribute political statements that served no legitimate governmental purpose related to executive functions during the shutdown.

Using government resources to systematically distribute partisan political messaging across multiple official platforms violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the White House's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about government services.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the White House Communications Office violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of partisan messaging across the White House website, press office communications, voicemail systems, and social media platforms, and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than governmental purposes.



The White House Communications Office should focus on informing the American people about government operations, not coordinating partisan political messaging campaigns at taxpayer expense.
Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause






Exhibit A


← Post

 **The White House**  @WhiteHouse



We weren't kidding...

DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™

 **Donald J. Trump**   @realDonaldTrump







0:22

 **The White House**  @WhiteHouse · Oct 1

Every day Democrats keep the government shut down, the sombrero gets 10x bigger. 🤠

DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™

 **Donald J. Trump**   @realDonaldTrump





0:02 / 0:34


7:12 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 1.1M Views

2.4K 6.4K 37K 1.3K

← Post

 **The White House**  @WhiteHouse

Ah, sorry, Dems are booked all day tomorrow



11:11 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 309.2K Views



October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the White House Communications Office violated the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the White House Communications Office—under Director Steven Cheung's leadership—systematically used taxpayer-funded official platforms to advance partisan political messaging that violated federal restrictions on the use of appropriated funds for lobbying activities.

Systematic Partisan Messaging Across Multiple Platforms

The White House's violations were unprecedented in their scope and coordination across multiple official government communication channels:

- **Website Violations:** The White House's official website prominently displayed a banner declaring "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government." The site featured a live ticker counting by the second, showing the length of time "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government." These partisan statements used federal resources to assign political blame rather than providing neutral information about government operations during the shutdown.
- **Email System Violations:** The White House press office embedded partisan messaging into official email auto-replies sent to members of the public, the press, and other stakeholders. These auto-replies referenced "staff shortages resulting from the Democrat Shutdown," using official government communication channels to distribute partisan political statements to everyone contacting the White House.
- **Telephone System Violations:** Callers to the White House public comment line encountered partisan political voicemail recordings created by Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, who repeated partisan talking points, including the inflammatory claim that "Democrats forced the government shutdown fight because they want to fund health care for illegal immigrants."
- **Social Media Violations:** The White House's official social media accounts, maintained by the Digital Office within the Communications Office, amplified similar partisan messaging across multiple platforms. These accounts posted inflammatory content, including "DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™" branding, mocking posts about Democrats being "booked all day tomorrow" to "keep the government shut down to give criminal illegals healthcare," and videos with partisan messaging, all using taxpayer-funded resources.

Legal Analysis

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The White House Communications Office's systematic partisan messaging violated the Anti-Lobbying Act by using official government platforms, website infrastructure, email systems, telephone systems, and social media accounts to create and distribute political statements designed to influence Congressional action on appropriations legislation. These messages served no legitimate governmental purpose related to executive functions during the shutdown.

Specific Anti-Lobbying Act Violations

1. **Grassroots Lobbying Campaign:** By systematically blaming "Democrats" for the shutdown across all official White House communication channels while providing inflammatory characterizations of Democratic positions, the White House conducted a coordinated grassroots lobbying campaign designed to generate public pressure on Congress to change its position on appropriations legislation.
2. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Lobbying:** The creation, authorization, and distribution of partisan political content across the White House website, email systems, telephone systems, and social media platforms required extensive use of federal employee time, government infrastructure, and taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
3. **Systematic Nature of Violations:** The White House's coordination of partisan messaging across every major communication platform demonstrates a systematic effort to use government resources for prohibited lobbying activities rather than isolated instances of political messaging.
4. **Inflammatory Content Exceeding Governmental Purpose:** Content such as "DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™" branding, mocking schedules claiming Democrats are busy giving "criminal illegals healthcare," and live tickers counting shutdown duration served purely political purposes with no connection to legitimate governmental information sharing.

Unprecedented Scope

The White House Communications Office's violations are particularly egregious because they transformed the nation's highest executive communication platforms into partisan political weapons. The systematic nature of the messaging—coordinated across websites, email systems, telephone systems, and social media—represents an unprecedented use of government resources for prohibited lobbying purposes.

Using the official White House website to display a live ticker blaming Democrats by the second, programming official email auto-replies to include partisan talking points, recording partisan voicemail messages for the public comment line, and coordinating inflammatory social media content all constitute violations of the Anti-Lobbying Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized lobbying purposes that exceed the White House's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications.



Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the White House Communications Office violated the Anti-Lobbying Act by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute systematic partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine:

1. The authorization and implementation of partisan messaging across all White House communication platforms;
2. What federal resources were used for lobbying activities rather than legitimate governmental communication purposes;
3. The coordination and systematic nature of the partisan messaging campaign;
4. The cost to taxpayers of government resources used for prohibited lobbying activities; and
5. Whether the White House has policies and procedures in place to prevent violations of the Anti-Lobbying Act.

The White House Communications Office should focus on informing the American people about government operations and executive functions, rather than coordinating systematic partisan lobbying campaigns at taxpayer expense, which is a violation of federal law.


Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause




Exhibit A


← Post

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse


We weren't kidding...

DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™

 **Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump





0:22

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse · Oct 1

Every day Democrats keep the government shut down, the sombrero gets 10x bigger. 🤠

DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™

 **Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump



0:02 / 0:34

7:12 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 1.1M Views

2.4K 6.4K 37K 1.3K

← Post

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse

Ah, sorry, Dems are booked all day tomorrow



11:11 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 309.2K Views



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Steven

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Cheung

Position Title: White House Communications Director

Department:* Other/Independent Agency

Agency:* Other

Agency subcomponent: White House Communications Office

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of these offices, Cheung and Levitt bear ultimate responsibility for ensuring the offices' compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the heads of the offices would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to White House counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given their position as the heads of these offices, it is reasonable to conclude that they are fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level offices.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

The White House is responsible for partisan messages displayed across multiple official platforms during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

On the White House's official website, a banner declared: "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government." The site also featured a live ticker, counting by the second the length of time "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government." Similar messages appear on the White House's official social media account, which is maintained by the Digital Office within the Communications Office.

The White House press office embedded partisan framing into official email auto-replies, which cited "staff shortages resulting from the Democrat Shutdown." These partisan messages were automatically delivered to members of the public, the press, and other stakeholders contacting the White House during the shutdown.

In addition, callers to the White House public comment line were met with political voicemail recordings. Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt repeated partisan talking points, including the claim that "Democrats forced the government shutdown fight because they want to fund health care for illegal immigrants."

These communications used official taxpayer-funded platforms to disparage one political party while implicitly supporting another, in violation of the Hatch Act's prohibition on partisan political activity using government resources.

The violations began on September 30, 2025, and continued throughout the shutdown. Because the postings were on the official White House website, through its press office systems, and via voicemail recordings, they were widely distributed and accessible to the public, White House staff, and other federal agencies.

As White House Communications Director, Steven Cheung bears responsibility for allowing official communications channels to be used for partisan political purposes. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt is directly responsible for the partisan voicemail recordings. Both officials would have received Hatch Act training and are obligated to ensure White House communications remain nonpartisan.

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
WH1.png	131,121
WH2.png	199,025
WH3.png	415,919

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identify to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT
MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT
YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the White House Office of the Press Secretary violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the White House Office of the Press Secretary—under Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt's leadership—systematically used taxpayer-funded official platforms and communications systems to advance partisan political messaging that blamed one political party for the appropriations lapse.

The Press Secretary's office embedded partisan messaging into official email auto-replies sent to members of the public, the press, and other stakeholders who contacted the White House. These auto-replies referenced "staff shortages resulting from the Democrat Shutdown," using official government communication channels to distribute partisan political statements rather than neutral operational information.

Most egregiously, Press Secretary Leavitt created and implemented partisan political voicemail recordings for callers to the White House public comment line. These taxpayer-funded recordings included inflammatory partisan talking points, including the claim that "Democrats forced the government shutdown fight because they want to fund health care for illegal immigrants." This partisan messaging was automatically delivered to American citizens attempting to contact their government through official channels.

The Press Secretary's office coordinated with the White House Communications Office to ensure partisan messaging appeared consistently across multiple official platforms, including the White House website's banner declaring "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government" and the live ticker counting the duration of what they labeled the "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government."

These communications used official taxpayer-funded platforms and government resources to disparage one political party while implicitly supporting another, serving purely partisan purposes rather than providing neutral information about government operations during the shutdown.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The White House Office of the Press Secretary's partisan messaging violated these restrictions by using official government communication systems, voicemail infrastructure, email platforms, and employee time to create and distribute political statements that served no legitimate governmental purpose related to press operations or public information functions during the shutdown.

Using government resources to systematically distribute partisan political messaging through official White House communications channels violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Press Secretary's office appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about government services.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the White House Office of the Press Secretary violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of partisan email auto-replies and voicemail recordings, and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than legitimate press operations.

The White House Office of the Press Secretary should focus on providing neutral information to the American people and the press, rather than coordinating partisan political messaging campaigns at taxpayer expense.


Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Noureldin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause




Exhibit A


← Post

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse


We weren't kidding...

DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™

 **Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump





0:22

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse · Oct 1

Every day Democrats keep the government shut down, the sombrero gets 10x bigger. 🤠

DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™

 **Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump




0:02 / 0:34


7:12 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 1.1M Views

2.4K 6.4K 37K 1.3K

← Post

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse

Ah, sorry, Dems are booked all day tomorrow



11:11 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 309.2K Views



October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the White House Office of the Press Secretary violated the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the White House Office of the Press Secretary, under the leadership of Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, systematically used taxpayer-funded official platforms and communications systems to advance partisan political messaging that violated federal restrictions on the use of appropriated funds for lobbying activities.

Systematic Partisan Messaging Operations

The Press Secretary's office conducted a coordinated partisan messaging campaign across multiple official White House communication channels:

- **Email System Violations:** The Press Secretary's office embedded partisan messaging into official email auto-replies sent to members of the public, the press, and other stakeholders who contacted the White House. These auto-replies referenced "staff shortages resulting from the Democrat Shutdown," using official government communication channels to distribute partisan political statements rather than neutral operational information.
- **Telephone System Violations:** Most egregiously, Press Secretary Leavitt created and implemented partisan political voicemail recordings for callers to the White House public comment line. These taxpayer-funded recordings included inflammatory partisan talking points, including the claim that "Democrats forced the government shutdown fight because they want to fund health care for illegal immigrants." This partisan messaging was automatically delivered to American citizens attempting to contact their government through official channels.
- **Coordination with Communications Office:** The Press Secretary's office coordinated with the White House Communications Office to ensure partisan messaging appeared consistently across multiple official platforms, including the White House website's banner declaring "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government" and the live ticker counting the duration of what they labeled the "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government."
- **Social Media Amplification:** The Press Secretary's office worked in coordination with the White House Digital Office to amplify partisan messaging across social media platforms. The official White House social media accounts posted inflammatory content, including "DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN" branding and

mocking posts claiming Democrats were "booked all day tomorrow" to "keep the government shut down to give criminal illegals healthcare."

Legal Analysis

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The White House Office of the Press Secretary's systematic partisan messaging violated the Anti-Lobbying Act by using official government platforms, email systems, telephone systems, and social media coordination to create and distribute political statements designed to influence Congressional action on appropriations legislation. These messages served no legitimate governmental purpose related to press operations or public information functions during the shutdown.

Specific Anti-Lobbying Act Violations

1. **Grassroots Lobbying Campaign:** By systematically blaming "Democrats" for the shutdown while providing inflammatory characterizations of Democratic positions on immigration and healthcare, the Press Secretary's office conducted a coordinated grassroots lobbying campaign designed to generate public pressure on Congress to change its position on appropriations legislation.
2. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Lobbying:** The creation, authorization, and distribution of partisan political content through official White House email systems, voicemail recordings, and social media coordination required extensive use of federal employee time, government infrastructure, and taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
3. **Direct Contact with Public:** The Press Secretary's voicemail recordings and email auto-replies ensured that every American citizen attempting to contact the White House during the shutdown received partisan political messaging, transforming official government communication channels into lobbying instruments.
4. **Inflammatory Content Beyond Governmental Purpose:** Content such as claims that Democrats wanted to provide "health care for illegal immigrants" and "criminal illegals healthcare" served purely political purposes with no connection to legitimate governmental information sharing about press operations or government services.

Unprecedented Abuse of the Press Secretary Function

The Press Secretary's office violations are particularly egregious because they corrupted the traditional role of the White House Press Secretary as a neutral conduit for government information. By recording partisan voicemail messages, embedding political talking points in email auto-replies, and coordinating inflammatory social media content, the Press Secretary transformed official government communication channels into partisan political weapons.



Using the White House public comment line to automatically deliver inflammatory partisan messaging to every caller, programming email systems to include partisan talking points in responses to the public and press, and coordinating "DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN" branding across social media platforms all constitute violations of the Anti-Lobbying Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized lobbying purposes that exceed the Press Secretary's appropriated authority for legitimate press and public information functions.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the White House Office of the Press Secretary violated the Anti-Lobbying Act by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute systematic partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine:

1. The authorization and implementation of partisan email auto-replies and voicemail recordings;
2. What federal resources were used for lobbying activities rather than legitimate press operations and public information functions;
3. The coordination between the Press Secretary's office and other White House offices in distributing partisan messaging;
4. The cost to taxpayers of government resources used for prohibited lobbying activities; and
5. Whether the Press Secretary's office has policies and procedures in place to prevent violations of the Anti-Lobbying Act.

The White House Office of the Press Secretary should focus on providing neutral information to the American people and the press corps, rather than coordinating partisan lobbying campaigns at taxpayer expense, which is a violation of federal law.


Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause




Exhibit A


← Post

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse


We weren't kidding...

DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™

 **Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump





0:22

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse · Oct 1

Every day Democrats keep the government shut down, the sombrero gets 10x bigger. 🤠

DEMOCRAT SHUTDOWN™

 **Donald J. Trump** @realDonaldTrump




0:02 / 0:34


7:12 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 1.1M Views

2.4K 6.4K 37K 1.3K

← Post

 **The White House** @WhiteHouse

Ah, sorry, Dems are booked all day tomorrow



11:11 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 309.2K Views



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT FILING A HATCH ACT COMPLAINT WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL

This form should be used to file complaints alleging violations of the Hatch Act. In order for us to best understand your allegations, we encourage you to fill in all the fields that you can. However, only those fields marked with an asterisk are required. If you fail to fill in a required field, your complaint cannot be processed. When providing information, please be as specific as you can, provide as much detail as possible, and attach/enclose all supporting documentation with your complaint filing. Prior to submitting your complaint to OSC, we recommend you review the information located on our website. If you have any questions about this form, you may phone the Hatch Act Hotline at (202) 804-7002.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Title:

First Name:* Omar

Middle Initial:

Last Name:* Noureldin

International Address?: No

Address:*

805 Fifteenth Street NW

Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Office Phone Number: 202-833-1200

Ext.

Email Address:* onoureldin@commoncause.org

Preferred means of contact:

Email: Yes

Cell Phone Number: No

Home Phone Number: No

Office Phone Number: No

Are you referring this complaint on behalf of a government agency? No

Information about referring agency, if applicable.

Agency:



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Your Position Title:

REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

Do you have representation?* No

Information about representative, if applicable.

First Name:*

Last Name:*

Middle Initial:

International Address?

Address:*

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Cell Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL WHO ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED THE HATCH ACT (SUBJECT)

Subject's Employment Status:* Federal government employee

Title:

Subject's First Name:* Karoline

Subject's Middle Initial:

Subject's Last Name:* Leavitt

Position Title: White House Press Secretary

Department:* Other/Independent Agency

Agency:* Other

Agency subcomponent: White House Office of the Press Secretary

Subject's Address:*



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Office Phone Number:

Ext.

Other Phone Number:

Home Phone Number:

Email Address:

Is the Hatch Act Subject a Political Appointee?

Yes

Does the Subject have knowledge of the Hatch Act?*

Yes

If yes, please explain why you believe the Subject knows about the Hatch Act (for example: agency training, agency distribution of brochures, flyers, e-mails, prior contact with OSC):

As head of these offices, Cheung and Levitt bear ultimate responsibility for ensuring the offices' compliance with all applicable laws and ethical obligations. In this role, the heads of the offices would have received formal training on the Hatch Act, been briefed on federal ethics requirements, and had access to White House counsel and resources regarding restrictions on political activity. Given their position as the heads of these offices, it is reasonable to conclude that they are fully aware of the Hatch Act and its application to federal officials holding such high-level offices.

SUBJECT'S SUPERVISOR'S INFORMATION

Subject's Supervisor's First Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Middle Initial:

Subject's Supervisor's Last Name:

Subject's Supervisor's Title:

Office Telephone:

Ext.

Other Telephone:

Fax:

Email Address:

ALLEGED VIOLATION



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

1. For complaints involving a Subject employed by the federal government, which of the following actions are you alleging?*

Using one's official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election.

No

Soliciting, accepting, or receiving political contributions.

No

Being a candidate in a partisan election.

No

Soliciting or discouraging the participation in political activity of any person who has business before their employing agency.

No

Engaging in political activity while on duty, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or while using a vehicle owned or leased by the United States government.

Yes

Taking an active part in political management or political campaigns (This prohibition applies only to further restricted employees. A list of such employees can be found [here](#) or at 5 U.S.C. § 7323(b)).

No

2. Please provide a detailed description of the alleged violation(s) and attach/enclose any supporting documentation with your complaint filing. To process your complaint, you must provide as much detailed information as possible. Without sufficient information, we may be unable to investigate your allegation(s).*

A detailed description should include:

- a. What the Subject did that allegedly violated the Hatch Act;
- b. Where the alleged violation(s) occurred;
- c. When the alleged violation(s) took place; and
- d. Who else has knowledge that the alleged violation(s) occurred and their relationship to the Subject.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

Description of alleged violation:

The White House is responsible for partisan messages displayed across multiple official platforms during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025. On the White House's official website, a banner declared: "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government." The site also featured a live ticker, counting by the second the length of time "Democrats Have Shut Down the Government." Similar messages appear on the White House's official social media account, which is maintained by the Digital Office within the Communications Office. The White House press office embedded partisan framing into official email auto-replies, which cited "staff shortages resulting from the Democrat Shutdown." These partisan messages were automatically delivered to members of the public, the press, and other stakeholders contacting the White House during the shutdown. In addition, callers to the White House public comment line were met with political voicemail recordings. Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt repeated partisan talking points, including the claim that "Democrats forced the government shutdown fight because they want to fund health care for illegal immigrants." These communications used official taxpayer-funded platforms to disparage one political party while implicitly supporting another, in violation of the Hatch Act's prohibition on partisan political activity using government resources. The violations began on September 30, 2025, and continued throughout the shutdown. Because the postings were on the official White House website, through its press office systems, and via voicemail recordings, they were widely distributed and accessible to the public, White House staff, and other federal agencies. As White House Communications Director, Steven Cheung bears responsibility for allowing official communications channels to be used for partisan political purposes. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt is directly responsible for the partisan voicemail recordings. Both officials would have received Hatch Act training and are obligated to ensure White House communications remain nonpartisan.

OTHER ACTIONS YOU ARE TAKING?

Please indicate in this section if you have reported your matter through other agencies or organizations. If so, please identify the agency or organization to which you reported the matter and provide the current status. If you have received responses regarding your matter, briefly summarize what results were communicated to you and provide our office with copies of any correspondence.



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

ATTACHMENTS

Please note that the space available for attachments is limited. Therefore, DO NOT attach every document and email that may be relevant to your claim. You will have an opportunity to make additional submissions at a later date.

I have attached the following documents to my filing:

File Name	File Size (kb)
WH1.png	131,121
WH2.png	199,025
WH3.png	415,919

CONSENT TO DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Do you consent to the disclosure of your identity to others outside OSC if it becomes necessary in taking further action on this matter?*

I consent to disclosure of my identity on a need-to-know basis.

Yes

I do not consent to disclosure of my identity. (I understand my lack of consent may prevent OSC from taking further action on my complaint. Even if I do not consent, OSC may disclose my identity if required by law.)

No

CERTIFICATION

I certify that all of the statements made in this complaint are true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that a false statement or concealment of a material fact is a criminal offense punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both. 18 U.S.C. § 1001.*

Yes

BURDEN: The burden for this collection of information (including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering the data needed, and completing



COMPLAINT TO REPORT A HATCH ACT VIOLATION

For instructions or questions, call the Hatch Act Unit at (202) 804-7002.

* Denotes Required Fields.

and reviewing the form) is estimated to be an average of one hour to submit a disclosure of information alleging agency wrongdoing, one hour and fifteen minutes to submit a complaint alleging a prohibited personnel practice or other prohibited activity, or 30 minutes to submit a complaint alleging prohibited political activity. Please send any comments about this burden estimate, and suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, General Counsel's Office, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 218, Washington, DC 20036-4505.

This complaint of an alleged Hatch Act violation was received by OSC on: 10/3/2025

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF YOUR COMPLAINT, ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, AND ANY ADDITIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT YOU SEND TO OSC NOW OR AT ANY TIME WHILE YOUR COMPLAINT IS PENDING.
REPRODUCTION CHARGES UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT MAY APPLY TO ANY REQUEST YOU MAKE FOR COPIES OF MATERIALS THAT YOU PROVIDED TO OSC.